

**'For Men Only': a Qualitative Explorative Study of Danish
and Italian Men's Consumption of Grooming Products**



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Abstract

This is an exploratory cross cultural study about Italian and Danish men's consumption and perception of grooming products. It is an interpretivist research that uses the qualitative interviewing technique to generate the data. Single in-depth interviews were conducted on five Italian and six Danish men. The study explores the concepts of culture, masculinity, perceptions of the self and body and image, and how these are reflected in the consumption patterns and perceptions of the interviewees. The study suggests that the concept of masculinity and different cultural and social factors affect men's consumption. It proposes that these concepts are abstract and complex. Background issues which are dealt with in order to understand the general topic at hand are the concepts of masculinity in crisis, classifications of different types of men e.g. the metrosexual and the übersexual, and grooming and gender among other issues covered. The results point at complexities in the consumption behaviour and patterns between the two sample groups as a possible consequence of the divergence of global media culture and networks interacting with local cultures. Both similarities and differences were found between the groups. The results reveal that similar patterns in the consumption and perception of grooming products were found in the way the men construct their body and self image. The men raised common issues concerning which types of social groups and types of men they associate themselves with. Similar patterns were also found in the motivation for using grooming products regarding ageing, health, hygiene, attraction, and for keeping a good image in public. The men also had similar concerns for when grooming products cross boundaries into feminine territory. Differences in patterns were revealed in the perception of masculinity and the defensive attitude towards the products during the interviews, the Italian group being less threatened. The Danish group was also found to reject the metrosexual type of man more than the Italians. The Italian group held more knowledge of different grooming rituals as many of their male friends and family practice these. The Danish group perceived masculinity with more physical attributes as opposed to the Italian group. The Danish group was found to relate to the consumption of perfumes by the status they signal, while the Italian group was more concerned with their scents. It was concluded from a marketing perspective that it is necessary to reassess and update researches, as from a social constructivist point of view, the dynamics of culture in general and in a global world change constantly. Social influences and other cultural factors affect men's consumption and perception over time. There are both patterns of similarities and differences that were found in this research which should stimulate the thinking of further

marketing research and studies. Universal elements that may contribute to effective marketing campaign on a cross cultural level were especially found in the power of women's influence, and the übersexual type of man which presents a type of man many men can relate to, according to literature and the present study.

Keywords: Body Image, Consumption, Culture, Danish men, Italian men, Grooming, Masculinity.

1. Introduction

The aim and interest of this cross cultural study is to explore how the notions of culture, masculine identity and body image affect Danish and Italian men's consumption and perception of grooming products. Over the last decade, there has been a lot of attention to the rise in consumption of this product category in men's consumer studies. McKay et al. suggest that it is thanks to media and advertisements that men have begun to use more grooming products.¹ These channels promote these products by, for example, global icons like David Beckham or TV series like the 'Queer Eye for the Straight Guy',² and it seems men are becoming more aware of a global trend that prescribes a gradual acceptance for men to use grooming products more extensively.

The concept of masculinity is central to men's consumption in general and is seen as a direct factor in men's consumption of grooming products. It is suggested that as gender roles are blurring in the current post modernistic era, the consumption patterns of men and women are blurring just as much. Grooming products, or to use another term, body care products, is just one category of products in which this change is reflected.

The idea that masculinity is placed in a 'global crisis', so to speak, was raised by different authors and researchers such as Boni, Lewis, Kimmel et al. and Tager and Good³ The increased use of grooming products for men seems to play a role in this crisis as it questions men's traditional roles in society. McKay et al., for example, present grooming products as potential threat to traditional notions of masculinity. Traditionally the grooming market has been associated with feminine values.⁴ The crisis in masculinity basically refers to the blurring of gender roles and is reflected in men's changing attention to concerns such as body image, health and hedonism- all enhanced by gradual conspicuous consumption of body grooming products by men.⁵ The evolving trend is seen in many markets such as Britain, Germany, Russia, Spain, the US, Italy and Denmark.⁶

¹ McKay et al. 2005: 281-84

² Coad 2008: 33. An American reality series 'the Queer Eye for the Straight Guy' in which gay men give advice to straight men on how to dress and groom. The hosts are known as the Fab Five.

³ Boni 2002, Lewis 2008, McKay et al. 2005, Tager and Good 2005

⁴ Sturrock and Pioch 1998: 337

⁵ Jersild 2004, Haugaard 2007, Brand 2004, Byrnes 2006, Messe Frankfurt 2007

⁶ Jersild 2004, Haugaard 2007, Brand 2004, Byrnes 2006, Kline Group Report 2007

Apart from looking at masculinity as a phenomenon in crisis, I will also present masculinity as an abstract concept which prime authors and researchers⁷ who discuss and debate gender and culture issues, view as a socially constructed phenomenon which varies from individual to individual and culture to culture. As masculinity directly relates to men's consumption patterns and is seen to vary from culture to culture, it encourages the pursuit of deeper understandings of what is masculine in different cultures. Synovate,⁸ a global market research company, conducted a cross cultural quantitative research on men's perceptions towards appearances and male beauty products and found a universal value that men across cultures 'just want to be men' and strive to preserve basic masculine values. In contrast to this essentialist perspective, I would like to find deeper meanings and interpretations to such generalist claims and explore how grooming products affect men's masculinity in two different cultures.

Another aspect which some researchers ask to consider when marketing products across cultures is the gender perception of the product.⁹ As societies have been going through different historical periods and transitions, so have their consumption and use of different products. This, in turn, has affected to what degree different societies consider products feminine or masculine. Traditionally, in most societies grooming products have been marked by female traits until today's market in which they have gradually been accepted as male products. However, these products' attributes, traits, meanings and symbols could vary from culture to culture to some degree.

In order to make a cross cultural research of the influence of culture, masculine identity and body image on the consumption of men's grooming products qualitative interviews were made with two sample groups of different nationalities.

Italian men were chosen as one sample group, as there are indications that the consumption of grooming products plays an important role in Italian society.¹⁰ As a second sample group, Danish men were chosen, as northern European countries do not have a deep rooted tradition compared to the Italian culture for the art of beautification, known in Italian culture as the *Bella Figura*.¹¹

A qualitative comparison of this kind has not been done before in relation to grooming products and men. The only qualitative academic study on this issue done before was found in Sturrock and

⁷ Connell 2002, Connell 1995, Tager and Good 2005

⁸ Synovate 2008. See appendix for full report

⁹ Milner and Fodness 1996, Solomon et al. 2002: p.98-99

¹⁰ Wilkinson 2003

¹¹ Wilkinson 2003

Pioch's¹² research, yet it was limited to one culture. This study would like to take their study a step forward in a comparative and explorative cross cultural study.

The influences of global media on men's consumption, perception and use of body grooming products are also discussed in this study. Emerging terms such as the metrosexual, a man who is concerned about grooming and is in touch with his feminine side from the late nineties, or this decade's current term of the übersexual, a man who indulges in self care but yet preserves his masculine side, help shape men's perceptions and ideals on what is considered conventional trendy looks. Marketers are constantly trying to classify and segment different social male groups, so that they can find the right appeal to the right type of man. In a Business Week article from 2006,¹³ the author of the article, Nanette Byrnes, suggests that marketers are missing the average segment of the male consumer as media and advertisements choose to focus on appealing to male extremes such as the metrosexual, or to men who fully reject the trend. Part of the debates on masculinity in crisis questions the need to classify types of men, partly because some of the classifications connote homosexual and feminine tones and values.

Grooming products have had different uses by the male segment group over different periods of time and in different cultures. As it is a relatively new and growing market in some countries and also a global trend, it should be encouraged to explore the similarities and differences between markets¹⁴ for the sake of advertising and product development. I will therefore discuss the complexities of culture, and present interpretivist and functionalist approaches to deal with cultural analysis. The approach this study relies on is an interpretivist method. Thus, the results of this study do not propose any generalisations regarding how Danish and Italian men consume grooming products, but instead wishes to point out tendencies for further research and exploration. Furthermore, I wish to get deeper understanding of the relations of the interviewed men's perceptions of these products, which quantitative studies may less prevail in giving. I will not compare and contrast my findings to pre-given theories on how these men from these two cultures consume, but rather reveal new interpretations of their cultural behaviour and consumption. My results will suggest that there may be no clear cut solutions for the marketing of grooming products for men, and thus, each market is unique. My results will indicate complexities in the consumption behaviour and patterns between the two sample groups as a possible consequence of the divergence

¹² Sturrock and Pioch 1998

¹³ Byrnes 2006

¹⁴ Bird 2008, refers to Beiersdorf's research, a German Giant which provides personal care products e.g. Nivea

of global media culture and networks interacting with local cultures. To establish this comparison, I will look into different dimensions which should affect the way these men perceive and consume body care products. Masculinity, self-perception, hedonism, health, attraction, age, body image,¹⁵ status etc. are some of the concepts which will be examined, compared and contrasted in order to find patterns of similarities and differences in the men's consumption behaviour. A problem which I wish to examine is to what extent marketers should treat the male consumer as a homogenised consumer segment.

How do the notions of culture, masculine identity and body image affect the men's consumption and perception of grooming products in a cross cultural context?

As part of this main question, I am going to answer the following sub questions:

1. How do Italian and Danish men perceive their masculine identity?
2. How does the way these men construct the body and self affect their consumption of grooming products?
3. Are there any patterns, which indicate differences in use and consumption between the two cultures and why?
4. How can further studies and research on men's use and consumption of grooming products benefit from the results of this study?

¹⁵ Sturrock and Pioch 1998

2. Methodology

2.1 Defining Grooming Products

This thesis explores men's relation to grooming products. The term grooming products entails a large number of different product categories, which ranges from any kind of personal care appliances such as body shower, tooth paste, shaving cream and so on. Different products naturally generate different responses as people will typically have a different relationship to toothpaste compared to anti-wrinkle cream, for example. While it is interesting to investigate which items people use, this study is more interested in how the interviewees perceive grooming products in general and, where the boundaries for certain products lie in general. Therefore the more general term grooming products is used. What is also explored is the grooming rituals the men go through, such as hair removal and going to beauty centres, as part of the world of grooming in general. Different literature uses different terms for the same product range, e.g. personal care products and body care products. I will alternate between the different terms for the sake of variation in language; however, it is important to point out that these references entail the same meaning.

2.2 Overall Approach

This research takes its methodological point of departure in comparative, qualitative analysis, as its design entails the issue of studying two cases, or in other words, two sample groups from two different nations, contrasting them and using more or less identical methods.¹⁶ The basic format is in-depth interviews with a limited number of members from the two groups. The identical method means that the same interview guide, containing more or less the same questions, is employed in each interview. This interview guide is constructed in order to gain understanding and knowledge of the men's perceptions of concepts such as masculinity and grooming products. The aim is to explain a social phenomenon and search for a deeper understanding of these concepts through a cross cultural comparison.¹⁷ The social phenomenon in question is the increase of attention to men's grooming on a global scale and its implications for different markets. Through a cross cultural

¹⁶ Bryman 2008: 58

¹⁷ Bryman 2008: 58

comparison of rather opposing cultures such as the Northern European in contrast to the Southern European, I wish to raise the question of whether marketers need to consider certain parameters when marketing grooming products to men in different cultures. In this way I would like to broaden the pre-existing perspectives on men's relation to grooming products and stimulate marketers to investigate the complexities of men's relation to such products, and thus gain new knowledge and deeper insights.

This research deals with abstract concepts such as culture and masculinity. In each theoretical chapter I argue for that culture, masculinity and goods, interact in a social world which is built according to each individual's own interpretation and perception. This social world is in a constant state of revision.¹⁸ Along this line of thought I therefore present a social constructivist point of view that points out that social meaning constantly changes as it relies on time and place. As I would like to understand the two groups' cultural behaviour, I let the cultural patterns emerge by themselves without having to test them on pre-existing theoretical assumptions on how the cultures should behave according to a functionalist approach. In this way my line of method in the analysis takes an interpretivist form in which the analysis was interpreted according to the social world of the participants.¹⁹ I do not let my preconceptions contaminate the results, except in my choice of cultures as I up front assume that there may be cultural differences if relying on stereotypical views when comparing the two selected cultures. I also present essentialist views throughout the theory, as I would not like to rule out that as men belong to a specific segment group by having a common gender, may assume similar consumption patterns due to pre-given biological conceptions.

2.3 Methodological Process

I use both a deductive and an inductive process. By a deductive process what is meant is that I expect to find similarities and differences in the consumption behaviour of the two groups. To conduct a cross cultural comparison and to make an assumption about a difference, I therefore choose two cultures, a Northern European and a Southern European, where there is a good chance that there may be a difference. I base my assumptions on traditional and stereotypical views of

¹⁸ Bryman 2008: 19

¹⁹ Bryman 2008: 366

Italian men as being playboy types who are obsessed with their looks,²⁰ and therefore may be more aware of grooming products as opposed to other cultures, which do not have the same stereotypical stigma, in this case Danish men. To strengthen this assumption, I also rely on Wilkinson's article from the LA Times²¹ who discusses the Italian obsession with the art of beautification which is an integrated part of Italian society and may suggest that the Italian men may be more concerned with grooming products. By comparison there are no similar stories about Danish men. Also, from literature research it was found that Italy is one of the largest markets in the male grooming industry in Europe,²² which means it is an already well established market in Italy. In Denmark the market is growing and while it will naturally, due to the size of the country, never be as big a market as the Italian, it could appear to be less established. These initial assumptions present my preconceptions that expect to find differences between the two cultures. My preconceptions about the similarities, on the other hand, rely on the assumption that the two cultures are part of a global fashion system in which they are exposed to similar information and media that encourage men to consume more body care products by signalling a global social acceptance to the trend. Furthermore, they belong to the same biological segment. I then build a theory which is to guide my understandings of the interviewees' relation to grooming products. From the preconceptions and pre-existing material on men, culture and grooming, which I test through the results of the study, I go through a deductive and linear process. However, as results usually reveal new insights and knowledge that were not expected, new data and theory are thus generated. As these meanings were not put into question prior to initiating the research, an inductive process is thus being unfolded.

The method chosen for the research was the qualitative form rather than quantitative form. This is linked to the interpretative process where the interviewees are encouraged to tell their stories and their viewpoints as unpolluted as possible from the researcher's opinions and agenda. The qualitative interview allows the exploration of interesting issues that the interviewee is bringing up and brings forth information not predicted by the researcher. The process is described in the interview section. A quantitative research could have brought up valuable hard facts, like for example, how much the interviewees spend, which brand they use etc. But it was decided not to follow that approach for three main reasons. The researcher would have to anticipate the potential interesting issues and thereby miss the valuable information that would appear during the interview.

²⁰ Tager and Good 2005: 270

²¹ Wilkinson 2003

²² Kline Group Report 2007: Male Grooming Products, see appendix

Opinions, attitudes, hints, gestures, stories etc. are very difficult to quantify, and consequently valuable information may be lost in the quantifying process. The purpose of this study is to investigate diffuse issues like perceptions and patterns better suited for a qualitative approach; focusing on one form of method, namely qualitative, enables to conduct a more thorough and in-depth research, and thus extract more resourceful and valuable information.

Another important aspect to the methodological process dealt with acknowledging the challenges of cross cultural interviewing. Kvale and Brinkmann point out that when conducting cross cultural research, certain difficulties may arise due to verbal and non-verbal factors,²³ as the participants in the interview process have different cultural backgrounds and understandings of the world. In this case, the researcher (An Israeli living in Denmark) and the two groups of men all come from different cultural backgrounds. However, I did not sense any cultural barriers to understanding my interviewees' expressions and vice versa. On the contrary, I find the fact that the researcher is having a different cultural background from the two groups, could perhaps give more reliable and objective interpretations of the cross cultural comparison.

2.4 Theoretical Considerations and Literature

This study examines the consumption patterns and behaviour of two groups of men, Danish and Italian. Before building an analysis which compared and contrasted their behaviour, a background understanding to issues concerning men, grooming and culture was required. I start with a background chapter to understanding grooming products as traditionally associated with gender. This discussion is necessary in order to understand the expected level of resentment by the men towards the products as these are traditionally female connoted products in the western world. The chapter, however, also points out towards a global current trend in which these products are gradually shifting towards male territory. This point has later proven to be important for understanding the men's unexpectedly open attitude towards the products. The literature that was used to collect the information for this chapter referred to historical perspectives and background to changing gender roles in society in the western world and its consequences for men's consumption in which grooming products are part of the changing process. I referred to the writings of De Grazia

²³ Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 144-5

and Furlough²⁴ and Bocoock²⁵ who from literature review seem to encompass different relevant issues on changes in gender roles and their consequences for men's grooming. I also refer to different business articles.

The next theoretical chapter is split into three main parts: Culture, Masculinity, and Men and Grooming. As this study deals with a cross cultural comparison, it is vital to understand the complexities of culture and propose why it is expected to find both similarities and differences in the patterns of consumption between the two groups. Furthermore, I explain my line of approach to my understandings of the results by presenting the interpretivist and functionalist approaches. As this research does not rely on any pre-existing material on how Danish and Italian men consume from a cultural point of view, this research relies on the interpretivist approach. In the culture section I mainly referred to the works of Lewis, De Mooij and McCracken.²⁶ The two first authors were used as reliable sources in order to make the points which are relevant to the context of this study in relation to culture. McCracken's model on meaning transfer from the social world to goods was found to be the most appropriate source for understanding the dynamics between culture, goods and consumers which furthers the understandings of the results as to why the consumption of grooming products should carry similar as well as different meanings in the consumption world of the individuals in the two groups.

The third theoretical part deals with masculinity, which is one of the most important aspects to understanding men's consumption. I do not outline any pre-determined recipes to masculine vs. feminine phenomena, however, I argue that the concept of masculinity is to a large extent socially constructed, varies from individual to individual, and also from culture to culture. The literature used for this section is by one of the prime authors on masculinity and gender: Connell.²⁷ Boni and Tager and Good²⁸ were found as useful sources to supplement his writings. Tager and Good's paper was found highly relevant for the context of this study as it deals with a cross cultural comparison of American and Italian masculinities. Another useful source was by Coad²⁹ whose contemporary book deals with the classifications used for men since the beginning of the period when men were focused on as an important segment group.

²⁴ De Grazia and Furlough 1996

²⁵ Bocoock 1993

²⁶ Lewis 2008, De Mooij 2004, McCracken 1986

²⁷ Connell 1995, 2002

²⁸ Boni 2002, Tager and Good 2005

²⁹ Coad 2008

The last part of the theory chapter involves the direct relation between grooming and men. As grooming products directly relate to the body, the theories that were found, interlink the notion that people use grooming products in order to manipulate their multiple selves, and also enhance and extend the self in order to project a desired image. I present a study which was found to be the closest study to the current one in regards to men's grooming. The main authors referred to in this theory part are: Featherstone, Solomon et al. and Sturrock and Pioch.³⁰

The theory was used to inspire the researcher on the questions used for the interview guide, which will be discussed in the next section, apart from being utilised for making sense of the results.

2.5 The Interviews

The method utilised for conducting this research was single qualitative interviews, which took approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The idea of focus groups was rejected as the interviewees could have potentially inspired one another to answer similarly, or alternatively feared to answer truthfully as other men would have been present. It was also considered that the men could have been reluctant to answer truthfully, as I am a female researcher. However, as a way of dealing with such a situation I encouraged the men to tell stories. The interviews were taped and transcribed and can be found in the appendix.

The recruiting process of the Italian men was done in Denmark, as it was the most feasible method due to budget and time limitation. I interviewed five Italian men, who have all been living in Denmark from four months to seven years. The Italian men were found through personal contacts to the Italian community in Aalborg, Denmark. It was considered that their experience living in Denmark could have affected the results to some degree. There is no guarantee that these men are representative of all men in Italy, but neither would this be the case if the interviews were to be conducted on Italian men living in Italy for that sake.

Six interviews were conducted with the Danish group. Three of the men were approached randomly at Aalborg University and were asked to participate in a thesis research. The rest (eight) were found through contacts made through friends to men I did not have personal relationships with. In all,

³⁰ Featherstone 1991, Solomon et al. 2006, Sturrock and Pioch 1998

eleven interviews were conducted. Gathering more interviewees for the sake of more data could not have been possible due to time limitation. It was also unnecessary as after interviewing four Danish men and Italian men, patterns were already interpreted.

All the subjects in this research study are heterosexual, nine of which have either girlfriends, are married or engaged. The last two were single. The age range was 22 to 33 year olds. It was considered that if the research was to be conducted on homosexual men, it might reveal different results. As the cross cultural differences were of more interest for this study, using only heterosexual men would reduce variation from other cultural influences. Six of the men were students, the others: a lawyer, a graphic designer, a purchasing assistant and two teachers. The men represent the elite in society, and it is considered that having had another sample group with a different occupational background could have revealed different results.

An interview guide was constructed³¹ and took the form of semi-structured interviewing. The questions were gradually moving from general to more detailed questions on the men's relation to grooming products. The questions were consistent for both the Italian and Danish interviewees with the exception of asking the Italian interviewees to comment on the 'Bella Figura' concept (see introduction). The interview questions were guided by the theory in which concepts of masculinity, body grooming, self perception and product gender were among others discussed. The interview guide can be found in the appendix. Visual tools were also used in order to extract information. The interviewees were shown pictures of different types of men, celebrities and other pictures of men which were taken from different international men's magazines such as Esquire and Men's Health. The images were to represent different types of men such as the average, traditional, metrosexual, übersexual and muscular type discussed in the theory chapter on 'classifications of male types'. The images were carefully selected in order to meet the criteria for these types of men according to literature's description. The men were asked to identify which of the men they could associate themselves with or idealise. International ads were also shown to the subjects in order to establish whether there are tendencies for cross cultural patterns between the groups. The results turned out to reveal that this aspect did not raise sufficiently interesting insights, as it seemed that each individual had their own personal taste when it came to the ads. However, this supported a part of the theory that suggests that consumption behaviour is a matter of personal taste. Other visual tools consisted of presenting different body care products on the table in order to stimulate the conversation. The

³¹ Bryman 2004: 321

men were shown products such as makeup and body shower gels/creams and shampoos. They were asked to select the body care product they would choose among two different designs, one in a pink colour to represent female values and the other a tailored product for men in black. This was done in order to see whether they would be reluctant to choose a product with feminine attributes and whether they would indeed be attracted to a product with male attributes.

The interview guide, interview transcripts and interview recordings can all be found in the appendix.

2.6 Interviewing men

Interviewing men is often perceived as a sensitive matter for which the interviewer should apply appropriate methods in order to extract valid information. Pini and Schwalbe and Wolkomir³² discuss the interrelationship between the following factors; who (interviewer), whom (interviewee), what (topic) and where (location), as elements in an ongoing process that create gender identities.³³ These elements were therefore considered carefully prior to the interviewing process. In relation to *who* is interviewing, Pini's paper is particularly interesting to this case, as she raises the problems of female interviewers interviewing men. In her research on male farmers' masculinities in an Australian organisation, Pini warns other female researchers on men's resistance to female interviewers in terms of reluctance to discuss certain issues or for protecting their masculinity. Secondly, she emphasises that consideration should be made as to the topic at hand- *what*. In the case of this study, my results were rather conflicting to hers, as the resistance was found to be different in nature. The subjects in this case seemed to be less threatened by the fact that the interviewer was female, but instead seemed to be more threatened by the topic which could potentially question their masculine self. Schwalbe and Wolkomir stress that the protection of the masculine self can in itself generate interesting data for the research.³⁴ These data were used to establish a cross cultural pattern of difference between the two groups, Italian and Danish, which will be elaborated on in the analysis chapter. The difference between my research and Pini's research could lie in the fact that Pini's interviewees were men with leadership positions, and thus

³² Pini 2005, Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2003

³³ Pini 2005: 202

³⁴ Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2003: 55-9

the relation between interviewer and interviewee was unequal, probably making it even more difficult when the interviewer is female. Secondly, their positions as farmers could have an effect on their protection of the masculine self. As mentioned before, most of the interviewees in this study are students, which place them on a more equal position to the interviewer. Secondly, their profession perhaps does not generate a need to protect the masculine self to the same extent as the farmers. Some other speculations can also be drawn as to why I did not find it as challenging to interview the men as expected. As the topic deals with grooming products, the men may think that the interviewer as a female individual is experienced about the subject and would therefore accept and understand the men's relation to grooming products better than a man would. Had the interviewer been a man, it may be speculated that the men would be more reluctant to show some vulnerable sides, like for example, insecurities about their bodies and the self, or other relations to body grooming which could be perceived as feminine or homosexual.

In terms of location- *where*, most of the interviews took place in neutral, undisturbed environments such as private rooms at the University of Aalborg. One location, however, influenced the interview process by the fact that it took place at a public library. Consequently, the interviewer was hesitant to answer the questions at times when people were around.

In regards to Pini's and Schwalbe and Wolkomir's³⁵ warning of men's protection of the masculine self when men notice the interview deals partly with gender, a particular incidence occurred. One interviewee's (Dane 4) threat was heightened³⁶ when he gradually became aware that the interviewer was interested in questioning the product's threat to his masculine self. Interestingly, instead of revealing that the products could threaten his identity, he chose to project a hegemonic masculinity, which showed that he was in control of the situation, and thus under no circumstance could he feel threatened by any product and especially grooming products.

2.7 Method of Analysis

The hermeneutical process of interpreting the interviews required that the researcher read the interviews several times until the researcher had achieved a sensible and valid unitary

³⁵ Pini 2005, Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2003

³⁶ Schwalbe and Wolkomir 2003: 58

meaning,³⁷ deselecting and selecting data which was relevant to the research as a whole. The interview guide was constructed so that as many themes as possible could emerge from the interviewee's world. The researcher let the interviewees come up with new and interesting topics.

The structure of the interviews was semi-structured,³⁸ as an interpretivist researcher lets theories and themes emerge in the reciprocal and interactive process of the interview. Dealing with 11 interviews of more than a 100 pages, and the need to contrast and compare the results of a cross cultural study, requires an organised method in order to generate the data. A table was therefore constructed in order to comprehensively organise the data in order to get an overview of the patterns of differences and similarities. Kvale's meaning categorisation and interpretation methods were also utilised.³⁹ The results do not propose generalisations as to how Danish and Italian men consume and perceive grooming products, but rather propose tendencies worth further observation and investigation. They propose that the male segment is a complex segment with different layers of cultural and social backgrounds. The two groups of men have a rather homogenous social background, and it is considered that had the individuals come from more different backgrounds, the results could have turned different.

In the process of analysis of a qualitative interview the information is extracted not just from direct answers to direct questions, but just as often from indirect answers, gestures, combination of answers and reactions to questions and issues as described by Kvale.⁴⁰ When information is not derived from direct statements it is rather difficult to claim final and conclusive results. Therefore the researcher often has to resort to the less satisfying terms "seems" and "appears" when describing the results from the interviews. When these impressions or tendencies are then backed up by other claims from the same interviewee or other interviewees, they gain strength.

Concerning the validity and reliability of my interpretations of the results can be referred to Kvale and Brinkmann's statement that "the quest for real, true meanings came to an end in philosophy some years ago."⁴¹ Instead they see the different possible interpretations of a text by different researchers as a virtue.⁴²

³⁷ Kvale 1996: 47

³⁸ Bryman 2004: 321

³⁹ Kvale 1996: 196, 201

⁴⁰ Kvale 1996: 50

⁴¹ Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 217

⁴² Kvale and Brinkmann 2009: 218

2.8 Limitations

Some limitations of this study have already been mentioned in the previous sections. I will summarise the main limitations in this section:

- The study is limited to a qualitative study and not incorporating quantitative elements as discussed in section 2.3.
- Only two national cultures were selected, partly to limit the scope of the study, partly as the project exemplifies a comparative study of two cultures.
- Having 5-6 interviewees from each culture is not representative for all members of their culture. However, it was possible to establish cross cultural patterns even with the limited number of interviewees.

3. Background on Grooming Products and Gender

In this background chapter I am going to discuss that the perception of products and their assigned gender is socially determined and constructed. In the first section I refer to Barthel⁴³ who sees products as socially constructed entities of which perceptions change overtime. This I will be able to assess in the second section on grooming products' historic perspective until present days. I will also refer to Milner and Fodness'⁴⁴ study on 'product gender perceptions' in which they found that apart from being socially constructed, products' gender perception also varies from culture to culture.

3.1 The Social Construction of Goods

Barthel⁴⁵ talks about the use of products in order to construct our feminine and masculine identities:

“We use consumer goods to define and reinforce definitions of what is masculine and what is feminine. The idea that these definitions are not natural but rather are socially constructed is given weight and credibility when we look at how such definitions have changed over time.”⁴⁶

Barthel emphasises here that we all have different perceptions of what are feminine and masculine products. Furthermore, this social construction of products changes overtime. The relevance to the context of this study argues that such a change has also occurred for the perception of grooming products. From the nineteenth century stricter rules were imposed by society on men on what are to be masculine standards.⁴⁷ In earlier centuries, for example, it was conceived to be a normal fashion for men to powder themselves or wear colourful clothes and lace.⁴⁸ In the next section I will go through the transitions grooming products have gone through in terms of gender and as socially constructed entities. It seems that in western society these products have been shifting from being

⁴³ Barthel 1992

⁴⁴ Milner and Fodness 1996

⁴⁵ Barthel 1992

⁴⁶ Barthel 1992: 138

⁴⁷ Barthel 1992: 138

⁴⁸ Barthel 1992: 138

regarded as feminine type of products from the mid nineteenth century until these days in which they crossed boundaries into male territory.

According to Milner and Fodness⁴⁹ and Solomon et al.⁵⁰ products can be ascribed feminine, masculine or neutral attributes and consumers often associate certain products with gender. What is more the perception of products also varies from culture to culture. Milner and Fodness discuss that it is necessary to market the product so that it will appeal to the right gender target as “from a consumer perspective, men and women want to know that the product is “theirs””.⁵¹ They further argue that if a product is perceived to have a gender, it may make the opposite gender of the gender typed product feel uncomfortable.

3.2 A Historic Perspective until Present Days

From a historical perspective, grooming products have been associated with a feminine type of product.⁵² De Grazia and Furlough discuss that cosmetics from the mid nineteenth century served as a means by which women would construct their female identity as well as cosmetics being a means of expressing social status, commonality, and difference.⁵³ Grooming products have a certain function to the process and thus formation of the individual’s identity. Cosmetics and grooming products as markers of gender identity have gone through transitions since the late nineteenth century. Traditionally they have been used to express and differentiate between social class and status and played an integral part in forming female identity as reviewed by De Grazia and Furlough:

“Across time and cultures, cosmetics have been important means of expressing social status, commonality, and difference. In the twentieth century, a period of highly unstable and contested gender definitions, cosmetics-as mass-produced and mass-distributed commodities-became especially salient markers of normative female identity.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Milner and Fodness 1996

⁵⁰ Solomon et al. 2002: p.98-99

⁵¹ Milner and Fodness 1996: p.41

⁵² De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.313

⁵³ De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.313

⁵⁴ De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.313

In this period of time anything to do with commercial beauty culture and recreational self enhancing products were linked to the tension between appearance and female identity.⁵⁵ In this sense at that time, different grooming products and especially cosmetics were undoubtedly part of a feminine consumer culture, mass consumed by women and thus could be perceived as feminine typed products. However, what was interesting at the time was the gradual change in sex roles and the blurring of feminine and masculine identities. Women gradually enrolled in the political and economic scene of the early twentieth century, activities which were once associated with masculine roles. In turn, “Women’s growing presence in the labour force generated anxiety that was frequently represented in bodily and sexual imagery.”⁵⁶ Consequently this anxiety and tension would later spread to the broader spectrum of society to both genders. As far as factory workers felt the pressure to conform to good grooming and appearance.⁵⁷ As women and men were gradually changing roles, so were their consumption patterns.

From the mid nineteenth century, women were seen as the main actors in consumption as a social process.⁵⁸ It was only in later decades of the twentieth century that the male consumer has started receiving attention by researchers and theorists alike. In the late nineties of the twentieth century researchers gradually became interested in male consumption patterns in regards to the construction of desired identity, self-image and the self-concept.⁵⁹ Contrastingly, in the period between the mid nineteenth to late nineteenth century, the distinction between production and consumption was highly gendered: production for men, consumption for women.⁶⁰ Bocoock talks about the modern period, which marked a distinct division in gender values, women taking care of the household and everything related to consumption, while men were preoccupied with production and work and going to wars.⁶¹ The postmodern period, on the other hand, which was marked by global tranquillity and peace, allowed a beginning of change in gender roles. The attention from wars was drawn away, and men were not required to fight anymore. This gave them the opportunity to act as full time consumers since the 1950’s.⁶² Men started to change their attitudes to consumption and used it

⁵⁵ De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.323

⁵⁶ De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.326

⁵⁷ De Grazia and Furlough 1996: p.326

⁵⁸ Bocoock 1993: 95

⁵⁹ Sturrock and Pioch 1998: 337

⁶⁰ Bocoock 1993: 95

⁶¹ Bocoock 1993: 96

⁶² Bocoock 1993: 96

for constructing their identity just as women did with cosmetics and body related products before them.

In the period between the 1950's and 1980's men have increasingly started to reflect individuality through clothes, hair and body decoration.⁶³ Advertisers and marketers contributed to this change. The 1980's saw a new period in the phenomenon of male consumption. Thanks to advertising, marketing and new lifestyle magazines which were now available on shelves for men⁶⁴ - a new era of marketing desires for men emerged. Suddenly men were being "sold images which rupture traditional icons of masculinity."⁶⁵ An important in relation to understanding men's consumption of grooming products was the turning point in which products which were traditionally considered to be gendered typed and thus feminine, such as grooming products, could now cross the boundaries into male territory through branding desires of pleasure:

"They (young men) are stimulated to look at themselves – and other men – as objects of consumer desire. They are getting pleasures previously branded taboo or feminine."⁶⁶

Women's and men's roles in society today are under constant blurring, which translates into a confusion in where the boundaries are for what is considered 'right' for men to consume or not.⁶⁷ Despite this men are hesitant to cross the boundaries into girl territory by consuming products traditionally associated with feminine values.⁶⁸ When it comes to the grooming world, it is understood that some men would rather consume tailored products to the male segment as they are afraid that consuming such products would hit feminine territory.⁶⁹ Byrnes in her article 'Secrets of the Male Shopper' seems to indicate that men feel rather out of place in unisex spas and salons, in contrast to tailored for men salons.⁷⁰ Her perception comes rather in conflict with Milner et al.'s article who claim that in the long run it may be better to cater products to a unisex style of marketing as it requires great effort and sources to broaden the appeal to the opposite gender. Furthermore, they state that a risk also lies in alienating the primary target group of one gender. Interestingly, they exemplify that it is indeed possible to avoid this by giving certain types of

⁶³ Mort 1988 referred to in Bocoock 1993: 101

⁶⁴ Lavrsen 2007

⁶⁵ Mort 1988 referred to in Bocoock 1993: 102

⁶⁶ Mort 1988 cited in Bocoock 1993: 102

⁶⁷ Rebensdorff et al. 2006

⁶⁸ Byrnes 2006

⁶⁹ Milner and Fodness 1996, Byrnes 2006

⁷⁰ Byrnes 2006

products new brand names: e.g. Marlboro vs. Virginia Slims, or different category names, e.g. hair spray vs. grooming spray.⁷¹

Today the grooming market for men is still a rather sensitive topic despite men's ever changing roles in society, which in turn changes men's consumption habits. You can still notice proclaims for its sensitivity, for example, in website advertisements such as shaveeverywhere.com,⁷² where a man welcomes the viewers (men) to the website by stating the opening line: "Hi there...if you're here, you probably know that body grooming is a sensitive issue." (See figure 1.).

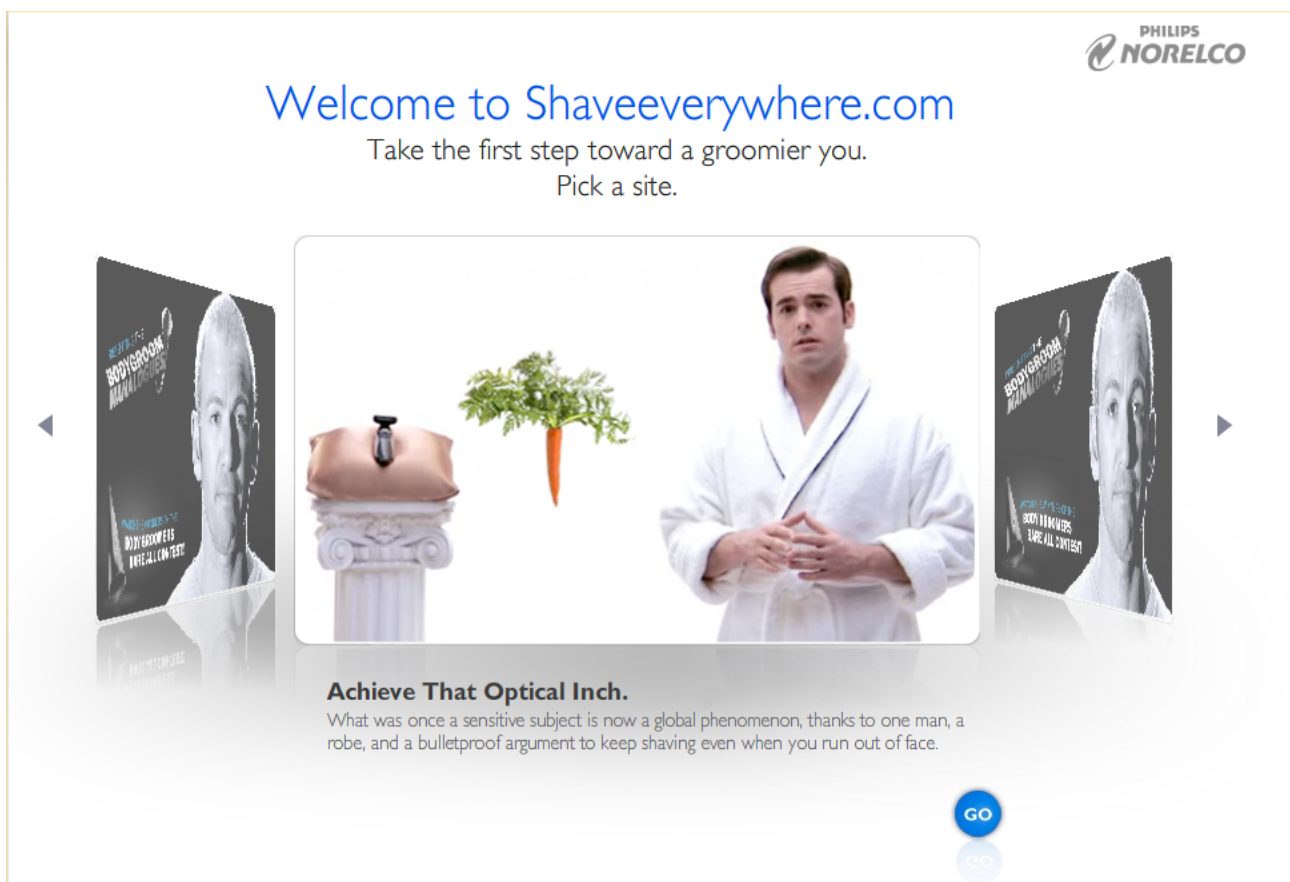


Figure 1. The Opening Page of Philips' shaveeverywhere.com website

But the boundaries for gender specific products keep changing as Barthel⁷³ suggests, and in particular in the case of grooming products. Just a recent article in business.dk suggests that what

⁷¹ Milner and Fodness 1996: p.47-8

⁷² Reference found in Byrnes 2006

⁷³ Barthel 1992

was once considered stepping out of men's comfort zone in terms of using body care products has nowadays turned as natural as playing sports.⁷⁴ Makeup products for men these days, for example, are found to be an unexploited niche, which is expected to become a big market according to business.dk. Grooming and cosmetic products perhaps still have a long way to go before they can become gender neutral, however, the current trend seems to indicate that if not entirely yet blended into men's daily consumption habits and routines, then at least these products have moved one step forward into male territory.

⁷⁴ Haugaard 2007

4. Theory

As discussed in the introduction, the industry of the grooming products for men, from advertisements to product development, is an expanding market worldwide. Throughout the last decades theorists and marketers alike have been discussing and debating what is the best approach when penetrating new markets with no clear cut solutions, as the world is a complex place made up of different cultures, which from year to year get more and more interconnected thanks to advances in communication technology. It is a classical question of debate which is raised, whether cultures are becoming more alike and converging and how long we are to keep the values which are anchored to our parent culture. But the answer is not simplistic, as the core concept of culture and its essence is complex. Discussing the concept of culture is where I begin this theory chapter. I present two modes of dealing with culture in empirical data, namely the interpretive vs. the functionalist approaches. I argue for how and why it is I take the interpretive approach in this research while not entirely rejecting the functionalist method. Afterwards I describe and discuss why it is culture is a complex concept to grasp. I then present McCracken's model of meaning transfer, which links goods, in this case grooming products, to the culturally constituted world of the individual and the individual itself. In this way, if the culturally constituted world of the individual is constructed by different cultures, it means that the grooming products should transfer different meanings to the subjects in this study.

In the second part of the theory, I will discuss a basic concept which directly relates to men's consumption patterns, namely masculinity. I will treat masculinity as an abstract concept subjected to different interpretations by different individuals in different cultures. I will present the global crisis in masculinity which shakes masculine values worldwide, which is partly a consequence of the idealised images of male bodies presented in media and advertisements. As a final point in this second part, I will refer to some of the global concepts of male types, which have emerged over the years in order to appeal to different segments of the male population.

In the third part of the theory chapter, I will discuss the relation between men and grooming products. I will mainly focus on theories relating to the body and the self, as grooming products' function lie in shaping physical and abstract aspects of the individual. I will finally account for

Sturrock and Pioch's⁷⁵ findings in relation to men's consumption of grooming products, as apart from this study. It is the only academic study found to have conducted a qualitative study on men's perceptions and use of grooming products.

4.1 Culture

4.1.1 The Interpretive and Functionalist Approaches

When debating the concept of culture, two approaches are usually taken to the concept, namely the interpretivist school of thought and functionalist school of thought. In basic cultural theory, Askehave et al. define these approaches as follows: the interpretivist being "inspired by a humanistic tradition, relying on individual interpretations of meaning, arguing against generalisations and fixed frames of interpretation"⁷⁶ and the functionalist which tends to "associate culture with a place or a country which exists 'out there', imposing patterns of behaviour on its members".⁷⁷ As already mentioned in the methodology, the approach taken in this study supports the interpretivist view, but on the other hand, does not fully reject the functionalist line of thought either, as will be elaborated on in the following discussion. But first I will discuss why it is necessary to understand these two views in the context of this study.

As described in the introduction, the reason I would like to conduct a cross cultural research is in order to better understand how men across cultures consume and relate to body grooming products. The reason I choose two rather different cultures is because I have some preconceptions about the difference between the two cultures as discussed in the methodology, where I hope a qualitative research could reveal new understandings and test these preconceptions. As this research gains deeper knowledge of two different cultures, it can therefore be described as an interpretive process which tests preconceptions. Our preconceptions of a culture which exist 'out there' can therefore be described as a functionalist predetermination. If the results are to confirm some of these preconceptions then they would support the functionalist line of thought to some extent.

⁷⁵ Sturrock and Pioch 1998

⁷⁶ Askehave et al. 2006: 10

⁷⁷ Askehave et al. 2006: 9

Furthermore, it can be said that to reject this school of thought would mean that there would not be any use of books and papers describing different countries and their cultures. Therefore the point of view of the researcher is that functionalist theory can serve as a point of reference which can guide a researcher. However, it is required to understand the dynamics of different cultures, as they revolve and change overtime, and therefore the interpretivist approach is useful. Furthermore, Levine et al.,⁷⁸ for example, talk about context and situation which are important factors to the dynamics and understandings of different cultures. In short, culture is dependent on different external factors which contribute to its dynamics and therefore require a constant interpretive understanding and re-evaluation of its behaviour and structure.

4.1.2 Culture and its Complexities

One of the reasons why it is we often like to discuss the concept of culture is because many people and theorists around the world are still trying to grasp what culture is really all about and seek appropriate definitions and descriptions to what culture can be. As many theorists have argued before, there is no one appropriate definition to culture, just as the world has approximately six billion residents of whom each view and interpret culture through their own lens. Taking a functionalist point of departure would neglect the complexities of the concept, as the functionalist approach by essence would usually ascribe one unifying culture to a nation. By contrast, an interpretivist approach would argue that it is impossible to equate one nation to one culture as Levine et al. suggest.⁷⁹ First of all, a nation, for example, may consist of many subcultures. Therefore if one is to define culture as something which is shared among people belonging to the same socially defined group, may be perceived as rather vague. For example, the American culture consists of many subcultures, e.g. Hispanic, Afro-American, Native-American etc. This being the case, it may be difficult to define the mainstream American culture, a socially defined culture. Similarly, if looking at culture as a dynamic structure, it can be argued that Danish and Italian culture are not the same cultures as they were thirty years ago, as the countries, for example, receive immigrants with different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, which may affect the local culture in some way. Furthermore, other influences coming from international media and general inter-

⁷⁸ Levine et al. 2007: 213

⁷⁹ Levine et al. 2007: 208

cultural relations may cause changes in the cultural dynamics of the culture in question. The problem of ascribing an overall culture to a nation is not only true for a nation consisting of different sub cultures such as different ethnic groups. Tager and Good,⁸⁰ for example, discuss the Italian culture as sub grouped into different regional cultures, as for example northern and southern Italy. Similarly, Frandsen et al. talk about regional differences in Denmark, for example, the difference between Copenhagen and Bornholm.⁸¹

Another complexity of culture is that individuals are also part of different social groups and sub cultures. An individual, for example, may belong to multitude sets of cultures such as an academic group, age group, lifestyle group, class group and gender group just to name a few. Lewis, for example, talks about an imagined global culture which may be formed around a broad gradient of human communities, activities and purposes.⁸² It is thanks to communicational processes and various modes of global networked media⁸³ that these global imagined communities and groups may interact and form. In this way, individuals coming from different countries may form common cultural patterns of, for example, belonging to the same age group, and interesting to this case, gender group, which could affect their modes of consumption patterns similarly. It can therefore be argued that even though individuals may find common cultural ground with members of the same country, these individuals also belong to other types of culture as mentioned previously. It is usually hard to identify which of these is the prime culture and which are then the subcultures of the individual, as often there is no such distinction.

Finally, I would like to argue in relation to culture why it is I do not fully reject the functionalist approach to culture. If looking at a national culture it is true that it is rather vague to generalise and look at it as one entity as discussed above. It is usually so that when we equate people to their origin of nationality, we do this to simplify matters and use cultural nationality as a point of reference.

Levine et al. suggest that:

“... commonalities distinguish, in culture-relevant ways, peoples of one nation from peoples of other nations.”⁸⁴

If to take De Mooij’s definition of culture, for example, the following ideas can emerge:

⁸⁰ Tager and Good 2005: 265

⁸¹ Frandsen et al. 2002: 109

⁸² Lewis 2008: 18

⁸³ Lewis 2008: 18

⁸⁴ Levine et al. 2007: 208

“Culture is the glue that binds groups together. Without cultural patterns - organised systems of significant symbols - people would have difficulty living together. Culture is what defines a human community, its individuals and social organisations.”⁸⁵

The systems of significant symbols could be understood, for example, as a common exposure of the individuals in society to national traditions and certain behaviours which serve as a point of reference for the individuals in the society of question. This may perhaps explain why when we travel and meet a new culture we tend to observe patterns which are common to the individuals in that society. Interestingly, when foreign groups meet in another country, they tend to refer and perceive cultural patterns which glue, so to speak, the members of that society. But as a researcher who takes the social constructivist point of view it is important to emphasise that certain traditions and behaviours are subject to change and are dependent on contextual processes. When conducting a research, it is therefore also important to observe how the subjects behave according to the context of the interview and the impressions they want to put on the researcher. What is more, how they react to the research topic as discussed in the methodology on interviewing men.

When analysing cultural differences or similarities, it is necessary to recognise that despite expectations of tendencies that should reflect cultural characteristics, individuals are unique, each having their own personal traits and characteristics that may be independent of their cultural background. Thus, Levine et al. propose that:

“Specifying levels of theory involves making predictions for the relationships among theoretical constructs based on differences due to culture, individual differences regardless of culture, or differences within cultures.”⁸⁶

4.1.3 Culture, Goods and Consumers

In his model of the cultural meaning of consumer goods, McCracken draws a link between the culturally constituted world, consumer goods and the individual consumer.⁸⁷ The model proposes

⁸⁵ De Mooij 2004: 26

⁸⁶ Levine et al. 2007: 211

⁸⁷ McCracken 1986: 71-2

that consumer goods transfer meanings and symbols from the culturally constituted world to the individual consumer. McCracken defines the culturally constituted world as follows:

“This is the world of everyday experience in which the phenomenal world presents itself to the individual’s senses fully shaped and constituted by the beliefs and assumptions of his/her culture.”⁸⁸

The culturally constituted world consists of a set of fashion systems, designers, producers, advertisers, and consumers.⁸⁹ Solomon et al. describe the fashion system as follows:

“The fashion system consists of all people and organisations involved in creating symbolic meanings and transferring these meanings to cultural goods.”⁹⁰

The three components of the model: culture, goods and consumers are then interlinked, and there is a flow of meaning transfer from culture to goods, and goods to consumers. It can be then realised that as goods reflect the individual’s constituted world by transferring meaning from the constituted world to the individual, and as this world consists of many fashion systems, the product in turn transfers a multitude set of meanings to the individual. As part of the dimension of consumer goods, McCracken refers to different types of rituals of which grooming rituals are part of. He describes grooming as a tool through which an individual can express his cultural footprint, whether being from a particular class, status, gender, age, occupation,⁹¹ or alternatively a national or global culture. Understood from this, consumers also ascribe cultural meaning to goods, and a flow of meaning is then created from consumers to the culturally constituted world. It seems McCracken puts less emphasis on this reciprocal process, as perhaps communication models from that time were more focused on one way communication.

In the context of this study, I could then assume that as the subjects come from different backgrounds and two different nationalities, the cultural meaning of grooming products and rituals should synthesise different cultural meanings and symbols. If these consumer goods reflect and transfer meaning from two different traditions and practices of grooming for men in two different countries, then my subjects should ascribe and associate different meanings to them. Furthermore, it is important to note that as culture is dynamic, consequently the system of meaning transfer will

⁸⁸ McCracken 1986: 72

⁸⁹ McCracken 1986: 71

⁹⁰ Solomon et al. 2006: 543

⁹¹ McCracken 1986: 72

also change and will be in transit as McCracken points out.⁹² This means that as goods are to reflect a cultural order which is in transit, similarly the perception of grooming products should evolve differently from culture to culture.

If to conclude this section, which interlinks the world of culture and goods, it can be said that the individual is part of a complex system of cultural meaning transfers that will reflect his or her consumption patterns. Different cultural levels that affect the individual's consumption could be sub-grouped into e.g. age, status, lifestyle, national and global culture. As the men all belong to a global media culture system, a national culture and other cultural sub-groups, it can be therefore assumed that the subjects will hold a cultural reference to the consumption of grooming products, both from a global as a local point of view, as well as other cultural factors playing a role.

4.2 Masculinity

4.2.1 Masculinity as a Social Construction

When authors talk about gender, they often make a distinction between biological and social processes:

“Scholars are careful to differentiate between *sex*, a distinction based on biological differences, and *gender*, a term used to describe characteristics society ascribes to persons of one sex or the other.”⁹³

From a biological standpoint, one can find essentialist and positivist thinking in which it is claimed that humans are pre-programmed to understand what is masculine and what is feminine. Connell, on the other hand, criticises the essentialist approach by claiming that:

“If we spoke only of differences between men as a bloc and women as a bloc, we would not need the terms ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ at all.”⁹⁴

In ‘Masculinities’ in the chapter towards finding a definition of masculinity, Connell further states that:

⁹² McCracken 1986: 71

⁹³ Craig 1992: 2

⁹⁴ Connell 1995: 69

“...to define masculinity as what-men-empirically-are is to rule out the usage in which we call some women ‘masculine’ and some men ‘feminine’, or some actions or attitudes ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ regardless of who displays them.”⁹⁵

He then proposes that although we are born gendered, being a man or a woman is not a fixed state, and thus, we actively construct gender and our perception of what is masculine and feminine throughout the course of our life.⁹⁶ This is in line with the social constructivist school of thought. In his book on ‘Gender’ (2002), he also discusses the perception of gender, masculinities and femininities to be in transition and to vary according to cultural contexts.⁹⁷ Craig supplements this perception by stating that “masculinity is what a culture expects of its men.”⁹⁸ Furthermore, Craig states that as perceptions of gender are in constant transition, it is difficult to determine what men conceive to be appropriate masculine behaviour.⁹⁹

In a way, it could be argued that similarly to the perception of culture which is viewed by some as socially constructed and abstract, so is masculinity. Similarly to culture, masculinity exists within broader sets of sub-cultural groups and is perceived differently according to those groups. Connell has termed such patterns of masculinity as ‘multiple masculinities’ in which one can find varieties of masculinities from class and race to work related.¹⁰⁰ Furthermore, Connell, Tager and Good and Kimmel¹⁰¹ all discuss that when comparing perceptions of masculinity across cultures, there is considerable diversity.¹⁰² Connell complicates the concept by stating that:

“There is also considerable evidence that there are multiple masculinities within the same culture, even within the same institution, peer group or workplace.”¹⁰³

In their study on comparing Italian and American Masculinities, Tager and Good found, for example, that perceptions of masculinity differ from the northern to the southern part of Italy. However, despite these variations, they found a pattern which ‘glued’ the Italian men’s perceptions of traditional masculinity as opposed to their American counterparts, meaning there was evidence for differences between the Italian and American cultures. Tager and Good further criticise the

⁹⁵ Connell 1995: 69

⁹⁶ Connell 2002: 3-4

⁹⁷ Connell 2002: 10

⁹⁸ Craig 1992:3

⁹⁹ Craig 1992:3

¹⁰⁰ Connell 2002: 77, 89, Lewis 2008: 283

¹⁰¹ Connell 2002, Tager and Good 2005, Kimmel 2004

¹⁰² Connell 2002: 89

¹⁰³ Connell 2002: 89

essentialist standpoint when referring to Italian psychologists and scholars who tend to treat masculinity as one entity across cultures in Europe.¹⁰⁴

So can an essentialist view be argued to be found in Synovate's¹⁰⁵ research. In their cross cultural quantitative research on men's perceptions towards appearances and male beauty products, they found a universal value that men across cultures 'just want to be men' and strive to preserve basic masculine values. In contrast to this essentialist perspective, I would like to find deeper meanings and interpretations to such generalist claims and explore how grooming products affect men's masculinity in two different cultures.

4.2.2 Masculinity in Crisis

As presented in the introduction, different authors refer to a global phenomenon in the form of a crisis in masculine norms and ideologies.¹⁰⁶ This crisis, so to speak, is reflected by men's changing gender relations and self-identities.¹⁰⁷ Men's and women's roles have been gradually overlapping throughout the previous century until today, something that has affected their consumption patterns in turn. This process has occurred throughout the Western world. There are different problems that could emerge due to this crisis, but it seems the main issue lies in the idea that traditional masculine values are being threatened due to the above mentioned changing roles of men and women, and the depiction of men in media and advertisements¹⁰⁸ (see section 4.3.1). The way grooming products come into play in this identity crisis is reflected by how marketers are exploiting stereotypical images of the male body through advertisements in order to sell these beauty and body care products to the male consumer.¹⁰⁹ Some authors criticise these depictions. Boni, for example, criticises the idealisation of a global male body, which he calls an 'imagined masculinity'.¹¹⁰ Adding to this, McKay et al.¹¹¹ talk about an idealised male representation of muscular bodies in media and advertisements, which is supposed to solicit men to buy grooming products. To sharpen Boni's and McKay et al.'s point, marketers who are selling products to men seem to neglect that the

¹⁰⁴ Tager and Good 2005: 272-3

¹⁰⁵ Synovate 2008. See appendix for full report

¹⁰⁶ Boni 2002, Lewis 2008, McKay et al. 2005, Tager and Good 2005

¹⁰⁷ Boni 2002: 467

¹⁰⁸ Boni 2002, Lury 1996: 149

¹⁰⁹ Boni 2002: 474

¹¹⁰ Boni 2002: 476

¹¹¹ McKay et al. 2005: 270-89

perception of masculinity and equally its relation to the male body, varies from culture to culture as discussed in the previous section. It is understood that marketers see a universal code of masculinity which should work at reaching their male consumers across cultures. It seems that both Boni and McKay et al. criticise this essentialist marketing strategy of treating the male consumer as a homogenised segment by presenting him a standardised idea of what is masculine. Interestingly, Boni, McKay et al. and Holliday and Cairnie¹¹² relate these global pressures on men to conform to idealised bodies and looks to those found on women, which could be seen as part of the male identity crisis.

4.2.3 Classifications of Male Types

As introduced in the previous section and in earlier chapters, the male identity is in a global crisis as gender roles are blurring, consequently confusing the male position in Western society. Since the 1970's, when focus and attention were drawn to the male consumer,¹¹³ different terms to define the type of man marketers should target have emerged. Just to name a few: the dandy, the playboy, the retrosexual, the metrosexual, the traditional and the current übersexual.¹¹⁴ Marketers seek to define male segment groups as a key for reaching a large group of men when marketing and advertising products for men. It is important therefore to review and understand some of these male type concepts. I will focus on the most commonly used terms in this section.

The 1980's saw its first commercial stereotyping of a man who was not afraid to project sexuality conjoined with a masculine appeal, termed the 'new man'.¹¹⁵ However, it was not long after this classification started to threaten the male identity that the British media introduces the tougher type, named the 'new lad'.¹¹⁶ This marked the beginning of debate on men's changing images and identities. On the one hand, the male consumer was marked as a segment which offered new opportunities for marketers to market products never touched before by this segment. However, in the meantime this consumer segment was feeling uncomfortable with the new signs of feminine values and images that were being sold to him. This led to the term the new lad.

¹¹² Boni 2002, McKay et al. 2005, Holliday and Cairnie 2007

¹¹³ Lavrsen 2007

¹¹⁴ Coad 2008: 18-26, Byrnes 2006, Murad et al. 2007

¹¹⁵ Lavrsen 2007

¹¹⁶ Lavrsen 2007

The following decade, the 1990's, saw the emergence of a term which is perhaps the most controversial of them all, the metrosexual, which is commonly known to be associated with the English football star, David Beckham.¹¹⁷ If summing up the different definitions that are proposed for the metrosexual man, one can define it as a man who is vain and narcissistic and who is in touch with his feminine side, preoccupied with the body and self care and who spends his income on self enhancing products. But Coad in his book on *The Metrosexual* (2008), suggests that there are different understandings and interpretations to the term, which are at times misunderstood. For example, he compares Mark Simpson's perception, the first to identify and name the term and who suggests that a metrosexual is a man who can be heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual, to Euro RSCG's (a marketing agency) perception. RSCG, on the other hand, reduces the definition to heterosexuals only, in order to reach a large part of the male consumer, the average man. Coad argues that metrosexuality is a complex term which is socially constructed, and thus multilayered.¹¹⁸ He further argues against essentialist views which tend to equate metrosexuality with feminine rituals and values.¹¹⁹ Coad problematizes metrosexuality as being a concept which is usually misunderstood as associated with homosexuality. Interestingly, in the New York Times article by Warren St. John¹²⁰ on metrosexuals, it is suggested that there is a big segment of male consumers who enjoy playing with the idea that their sexual orientation is mystified due to their metrosexual consumption habits.

The next term to emerge somewhere in the mid of the current decade, and possibly due to the homosexual connotations the metrosexual had gotten, was the übersexual. Skin Inc magazine, which publicises information and trends concerning spa and wellness, defines the übersexual as follows:

"...a new classification. This man is interested in his appearance and grooming, but tends to be more traditionally manly and rugged than the metrosexual man."¹²¹

Again, definitions are subjected to different meanings and interpretations by different sources, however, scrutinising a business.dk article by Berlingske Tidende¹²² supports Skin Inc's definition

¹¹⁷ Coad 2008: 18, McKay et al. 2005: 284

¹¹⁸ Coad 2008: 18

¹¹⁹ Coad 2008: 30

¹²⁰ Warren St. John 2003

¹²¹ Murad et al. 2007

¹²² Rebensdorff et al. 2006

of the übersexual. In their classification of male types, Murad et al.¹²³ treat the metrosexual as a type of man who is still part of current trends together with a third type, the traditional, who is generally considered a non-skin care user. Once the traditional type is introduced to different products by opinion leaders, he becomes a routine and loyal user of his new products.

Scanning through the different sources and literature on the different classifications used for men over the last 40 years or so, it seems that when a new term emerges to describe a type of man who defines a thin line between masculine and feminine values, not long after a new term emerges to describe a man who is more secure about his masculine self. Consequently, the terms for classifying men have shifted back and forth throughout the years, for example, from the new man to the new lad and from the metrosexual to the übersexual. According to Byrnes,¹²⁴ if marketers would like to reach a large segment of male consumers then it is perhaps better to neglect the extreme terms and focus instead on selling images of a man who is, for example, neither metrosexual nor retrosexual¹²⁵ to the average man. According to her article, effective advertising would reach the average man who is the consumer in between the two extremes, as he is the bulk of the male segment. As current marketing and advertising focuses on extreme types of men, it is difficult for the average man to identify or associate himself with the images which are sold to him by such strategies.

4.3 Men and Grooming

4.3.1 Male Body Ideals in Western Culture

To understand what kind of images the male consumer is being sold in order to solicit him to buy grooming products, it is necessary to get an overview of these idealised depictions in the next section.

Until postmodern times, men were usually treated as an entirely different consumer group than that of women.¹²⁶ What was considered a norm to sell women images of beauty ideals, in earlier decades

¹²³ Murad et al. 2007

¹²⁴ Byrnes 2006

¹²⁵ Another term used to describe a resisting male type to the concepts of metrosexuality and other terms which depict a man who is in touch with his feminine side

¹²⁶ Bocock 1993: 95-108

did not apply to men. However, this is not what men are experiencing today. Part of the controversy of the male identity crisis lies in the images being sold to men through media and advertisements in order to conform to Western ideals of male beauty.¹²⁷ The changes in consumer culture seen today in relation to men seem to reflect changes in structures of gender roles in society which goes hand in hand with changes seen in media. Part of the images that are being sold to men deals with the encouragement of using grooming products in order to enhance self esteem.

Grogan, Kimmel, Lewis and Solomon et al.¹²⁸ all refer to ideals of male bodies in media that depict muscular bodies. In other words, this is what is conceived to be the norm for men. Grogan talks about a Western cultural ideal that the male body should be slender and ‘naturally’ muscular.¹²⁹ She relates this to cultural notions of maleness as representing power, strength and aggression.¹³⁰ Kimmel supports this fixation on muscles by adding that both genders, men and women, are preoccupied today with body features that exaggerate biological differences between the sexes.¹³¹ McKay et al.¹³², on the other hand, seem to suggest that not all societies tend to equate masculinity to muscular ideals. They instead refer to a study conducted by Wienke (1998) on men’s views on muscular bodies. In this study it was found that men were grouped into three groups; reliance, reformulation, and rejection of which the first attempted to achieve a muscular body, the second identified with it but realised it could not achieve it, and the last one simply rejected it, seeing it as unrealistic expectations. The idea that emerges here is that firstly it is not possible to generalise on society’s depiction of the male body, and secondly, especially not to expect that men’s reactions to muscular bodies are universally positive.

4.3.2 The Performing Body and the Self

Before reviewing a specific study that was made on men and grooming in the next section, it is important to understand the consumer’s relation to the body and self, as it plays a central role on how consumers perceive and purchase grooming products. These are types of products which relate directly to the body and in turn facilitate individuals in shaping their different identities and selves.

¹²⁷ Lury 1996: 149

¹²⁸ Grogan 1999, Kimmel 2004, Lewis 2008, Solomon et al. 2006

¹²⁹ Grogan 1999: 59

¹³⁰ Grogan 1999: 58

¹³¹ Kimmel 2004: 233-34

¹³² McKay et al. 2005: 275

In this section I will relate to the works of Featherstone, Lewis and Solomon et al.¹³³ who all interlink the performing body to the self. In the next section I will focus on Sturrock and Pioch's findings who make a direct link between the performing body and grooming products.

Featherstone, Lewis and Sturrock and Pioch¹³⁴ discuss an emerging trend that began in the twentieth century in which consumers gradually became fixated on appearances, termed as a kind of narcissistic era. This narcissistic period points to a new relationship between body and self.¹³⁵ The issues that were of concern and that are still of concern in the heart of the consumer deal with physical appearances which relate to e.g. beauty, health, aging and hedonism all found in Sturrock and Pioch's research in which grooming products assist men in building a desired image among their peers, whether being women or people in their professional sphere. Featherstone refers to this image and public appearance as *the performing self*,¹³⁶ which functions as the individual's outer body presentation of the self. To understand how *the body* relates to the perception of *the self*, Featherstone came up with a theory which suggests that our *inner and outer bodies*¹³⁷ are conjoined:

“...the prime purpose of the maintenance of the inner body becomes the enhancement of the appearance of the outer body.”¹³⁸

Our concern for the inner body reflects issues attaining to e.g. health and aging. Preserving such concerns help us to communicate a positive impression¹³⁹ on our peers through the outer body. Lewis further supports the claim of the postmodern obsession with appearances, for example, by stating that:

“...the postmodern intensification of youth and youthful appearance inevitably creates significant anxieties around aging, disease and degeneration.”¹⁴⁰

Lewis proclaims that the youth mentioned equates to freshness and newness.¹⁴¹ Freshness and newness can then be understood as the outer body's reflection of the inner body, which fights aging.

¹³³ Featherstone 1991, Lewis 2008 and Solomon et al. 2006

¹³⁴ Featherstone 1991, Lewis 2008, Sturrock and Pioch 1998

¹³⁵ Featherstone 1991: 187

¹³⁶ Featherstone 1991: 187

¹³⁷ Featherstone 1991, McKay et al. 2005

¹³⁸ Featherstone 1991: 171

¹³⁹ Featherstone 1991: 171

¹⁴⁰ Lewis 2008: 273

What Featherstone and Lewis¹⁴² touch upon are ways to manipulate the body in order to perform a desired self. Solomon et al. take the manipulation of the self a step forward and discuss the individual's multiple selves.¹⁴³ Each person has different selves which he chooses to display in different social contexts. With the use of different products, the individual can perform the particular desired self at the right situation. When for example choosing an understated perfume for work context, he or she displays a professional self.¹⁴⁴ Thus, a product may facilitate in manipulating the multiple selves for the right situation or occasion. Solomon et al. further state that the self is a complex concept that may be composed of many attributes.¹⁴⁵ Another interesting reference they make to the concept deals with the actual and ideal selves, which are relevant to this study as individuals like to play with these identities when they are exposed to different images. They define these concepts as follows:

“The ideal self is a person's conception of how he or she would like to be, while the actual self refers to our more realistic appraisal of the qualities we have or lack.”¹⁴⁶

Individuals usually like to compare their own qualities according to these concepts when they see different images whether in advertisements or magazines.

4.3.3 The Male Body and Grooming

A central point to the consumption of grooming products by men refers to the way in which they perceive their bodies. Sturrock and Pioch who were found to be the only researchers to have done an academic qualitative study on men's relation to grooming products, revealed six patterns that build this relationship between men and grooming products. Those were: *Image, age, attraction, health, an act of pleasure and the self concept*. The main outcome of their research revealed that men consume male grooming products to alter their body and body image.¹⁴⁷ It can also be understood from their research that men use grooming products to extend the self. Solomon et al. similarly talk about objects and products that are used in order to define a social role in which they

¹⁴¹ Lewis 2008: 272

¹⁴² Featherstone 1991, Lewis 2008

¹⁴³ Solomon et al. 2006: 210

¹⁴⁴ Solomon et al. 2006: 210

¹⁴⁵ Solomon et al. 2006: 209

¹⁴⁶ Solomon et al. 2006: 210

¹⁴⁷ Sturrock and Pioch 1998: 342

become part of us and in this way comprise the extended self.¹⁴⁸ Sturrock and Pioch further point out that men respond to the imagery transmitted by the industries that present male body ideals by attempting to conform to these ideals.¹⁴⁹ Thus, pressure is being put on men by media and the grooming industry. It was found by other authors that these images that are transmitted through the media usually depict muscular, young and healthy bodies.¹⁵⁰

In a review of Sturrock and Pioch's findings, one can start with the first theme of *Image*. They found that men use grooming products like aftershave and other products that release an appropriate body odour in order to reflect their desired image at the 'right' public sphere. For example, they found that the men liked to use different scents for different occasions. For professional purposes the men chose to use rather 'quiet' scents, while for going out occasions, they used stronger scents. This clearly indicates that the men made a distinction between different contexts of consumption when using grooming products, which is also in line with the theory of manipulating the multiple selves according to different situations discussed by Solomon et al.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, Sturrock and Pioch note that the use of the products facilitated the men in establishing their identities. This context parameter can also be compared to Jantzen et al.'s¹⁵² study on women's consumption of lingerie in which it was found that women use expensive lingerie when going out in order to extend their public self.

The next theme involves *ageing*. In Sturrock and Pioch's study, the men seemed to be encouraged to retain a young and healthy looking body as a way to conform to these narcissistic ideals. It was found that the men used, for example, creams against wrinkles in order to project an outer body which is young and healthy.

The third theme refers to *Attraction* and was related to men's worries about ageing, as they strive to decrease ageing in order to remain attractive to the opposite sex. A grooming product which was found most useful for the men to attract the opposite sex was aftershave which facilitated the men in keeping a good image among women and also among their surroundings.

The fourth theme concerns *Health*. The issues that seemed to motivate the men to purchase grooming products were among others to fight skin related diseases and to obtain a softer skin.

¹⁴⁸ Solomon et al. 2006:214

¹⁴⁹ Sturrock and Pioch 1998: 342

¹⁵⁰ Grogan 1999, Kimmel 2004, Lewis 2008

¹⁵¹ Solomon et al. 2006

¹⁵² Jantzen 2006

The act of pleasure, or in other words hedonism, is another theme that emerged. Here grooming products were found to act as a spoiling tool. The men found the pleasure in using grooming products in order to make them feel good and fresh. In this theme Sturrock and Pioch also refer to a global fashion system, in which men are increasingly exposed to the idea that grooming products are 'ok' for men to consume. In this way they gradually accept the pleasures of using these products, traditionally associated as women's products.¹⁵³

Sturrock and Pioch's study is the only academic research to have looked closely at a group of men's relation to grooming products and in this way reveals a lot of deep and interesting aspects. However, it is also important to emphasise here that when looking at a segment group like men, one has to take into account that each individual has his own personality, and therefore it is expected that the results of my study reveal a multitude of behaviours in the consumption patterns of the men apart from common and cultural patterns. Weber et al.¹⁵⁴ particularly refer to personality factors in their study on cross cultural differences between the French and American market in relation to the cosmetic industry. They further state that both cultural and personal factors play a significant role in the individual's consumption habits of these products. Sturrock and Pioch in their study by contrast did not refer to any cultural or personal factors that should have influenced the men's consumption of grooming products. Furthermore, Sturrock and Pioch's study was conducted in 1998, and since then further changes may have developed. In their study they also refer to the growing consumption of men's grooming products, and in turn the gradual acceptance by men to these types of products. This current study, on the other hand, may propose new perspectives in the decade after these products began to be a trend among this segment group, and in particular in two different cultures.

¹⁵³ Sturrock and Pioch 1998: 341

¹⁵⁴ Weber et al. 2002

5. Analysis

The following analysis chapter was conducted with the help of constructing a table to get a clear overview of the results of the 11 interviews. A detailed description of the table is presented in table 1. Kvale suggests that every researcher should find the method of analysis which is suited for his or her study,¹⁵⁵ as it is understood that every research is unique and different from the other. I therefore partly got inspiration from Kvale's five approaches to treating qualitative data, and partly developed my own method for analysis. I refer to Kvale's meaning categorisation and interpretation methods. Before explaining the details of the analysis methods for this chapter, I would like to point out that after the table was constructed and interpreted it was found to strikingly resemble a table in Bryman's *Social Research Methods* book from 2008.¹⁵⁶ I would therefore like to emphasise that no inspiration was taken from this table and the tables' resemblance are purely coincidental.

The main purpose of using meaning categorisation and a table was to reduce and make sense of the large amount of data. The categories of the table arose as described in the methodology chapter as part of the hermeneutical process. The selected categories are those that turned out to have the most interesting answers and results relating to the topics of this study.¹⁵⁷

The table is divided into three overall categories: Abstract, Physical and Social. Each category was divided into different themes. The abstract category was divided into the themes of *Culture*, *Defending the masculine self* and *Perceptions of masculinity*. The physical category which relates to the body was divided into the themes of *Perfumes* and *Motivation*. And finally, the social category which relates to societal influences and changes was divided into the themes of *Types of men*, *Recognition of men's grooming*, *Recognition of brands*, *Influence of reference groups* and *Social groupings*. The themes were further sub-categorised into more detailed themes as can be seen in the table.

¹⁵⁵ Kvale 1996: 187

¹⁵⁶ Bryman 2008: 650-51

¹⁵⁷ Kvale 1996: 192

Table 1. The table is a condensation of the most interesting issues being brought up during the interviews. The issues are interesting either because they refer to issues raised in the theory, were emphasised by the interviewees or resulted in different answers by the Danish compared to the Italian group. The check marks is a subjective rating on how much emphasis the interviewee gave the theme. The colour coding indicate cross cultural differences, interviewee's contradicting themselves and unique positions different from the other interviewee's.

Themes		Respondents														
		D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	I1	I2	I3	I4	I5				
Abstract Aspects	Culture	V			W	V	WW	V		WW	V	V				
	Reference to Culture	V			W	V	WW	V		WW	V	V				
	Stories About Friends and Family	V		V	W	V	V	WW	WW	WW	W	V				
	During the Interview	WW	V	WW	WW	WW	W	WW	V		W	W				
Physical Aspects	Defending the Masculine Self	WW	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W				
	Boundaries for Men	WW	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W				
	Perceptions of Masculinity	WW-muscles	V	V-muscles	V-muscles	V-muscles	V-muscles	WW	V	V	WW	W				
	Other than Physical	WW-muscles	V	V	V	V	WW	WW	V	V	WW	W				
Physical Aspects	Perfumes															
	Emphasis on Scent		-allergic													
	Emphasis on Status	W	-allergic	W-deo	W	W	WW	V	V	WW	V	V				
	Ageing	V		V	V			V	V	WW	V	V				
	Health	W	WW		W			V	W							
	Hygiene	WW		V		WW		V	W							
	Attraction	V			V	V	V	V	W							
Social Aspects	Good Looks	V	V		V	V	V				WW	W				
	Types of Men															
	Rejecting Metrosexuals	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W				
	Idealising the Übersexual	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W	W				
	Identifying with the Average Man	WW	W	W	V	W	V-traditional	-traditional	V	V	W	W				
	Influence of Reference Groups	WW	W	V	V	W	V-traditional	W	V	V	W	W				
	Women	WW	W	V	V	W	V	W	V	V	W	W				
	Peers	W	V	W	W	W	W	V	V	V	W	W				
	Age	W	W	W	W	W	W	V	V	V	W	W				
	Social Groupings	W	W	W	W	W	W	V	V	V	W	W				
Cross Cultural Patterns	Profession	WW	V		W	W	V	V	V	W	V	V				
	Recognition of Men's Grooming	WW	V		W	W	V	V	V	W	V	V				
	Recognition of Brands	W	W	V	W	W	W	V	V	W	V	V				

Colour codes:
 Contradicting Themselves
 Different from Others
 Cross Cultural Patterns

Check marks:
 Issues was not mentioned by interviewee
 Low emphasis on issue
 Medium emphasis on issue
 High emphasis on issue

No check
 V
 W
 WW

The names of the interviewees are marked so that the Danes are numbered from 1 to 6, and the Italians from 1 to 5. Each interview was read several times and carefully in order to determine a comprehensive interpretation of the data. A grading system was developed in order to determine the emphasis which was put on each theme during each interview. It is marked by a V symbol, from 1 to 3 V's. No marking indicates that the theme was not brought up during the interview. One V indicates that the theme was touched upon, however, to a lesser degree than in the other interviews. In this way the grading system is relative to the other interviews. Two V's marks a moderate coverage of the theme, while three V's suggest that the theme was covered to a larger degree and more extensively relative to the other interviews. All the markings relate to the interviewee's coverage of the topic and not the interviewer's, and indicate the degree to which the interviewees emphasise the relevance of the issue to their consumption of grooming products.

This system was constructed in order to get a comprehensive overview of the data as well as viewing cross cultural patterns between the two groups of Danish and Italian men. It is acknowledged that the interpretations are subjected to the researcher's understandings of the interviewee's worldview. In this way I use a hermeneutical approach in which I search for deeper interpretations of meaning.¹⁵⁸ I go beyond what is said directly and work out structures and relations of meaning not immediately apparent in the text.¹⁵⁹ For the quotes I will use direct quotes from the interviews without changing the language of the interviewees. Lastly, the colours in the table identify and highlight cross cultural aspects marked in red, contradicting elements marked in purple and differentiating answers marked in grey, in order to draw interesting patterns from the data. Out of all 22 categories and themes, the ones which are not high-lighted indicate no variations in patterns between the two groups. In the next sections I will elaborate on my interpretations of the findings.

5.1 Abstract Aspects

5.1.1 Culture

¹⁵⁸ Kvale 1996: 201

¹⁵⁹ Kvale 1996: 201

Two sub themes were grouped under culture: *Reference to Culture* and *Stories about Friends and Family*. Some of the interviewees saw some cultural influence on the way they view body grooming in society in general. The latter theme about the interviewees' stories about friends' and family's consumption patterns and use of body grooming is brought up under this category, as it is the most evident difference to emerge between the Danish and Italian group. I relate this to a cultural difference either because it emerged that the Italians are more open to tell stories and felt more comfortable about discussing body grooming, or either because it seems that body grooming is integrated to a larger extent in Italian men's consumption rituals.

As to the cultural references, D1, D4, D6, I3, I4 and I5 have commented on cultural aspects and body grooming. D1 and D4 seem to perceive that body grooming is traditionally dominated by women in Danish society. D1 referred to the influence of women in his family on his consumption of body care products and D4 commented on that body products are usually associated with women's products in Denmark. D6 made direct references to Jantelov¹⁶⁰, which he perceives to affect Danish men's use of body grooming. For example, he seems to relate 'smartness' and metrosexuality to something that Danish men would not idealise, as it is "not Danish to be smart", smart in this sense meaning looking good. He further commented that he mostly relates to men who seem Danish to him in the pictures he was shown when asked which of the men he identifies with. This interviewee consistently emphasised that his Danish identity plays a role on his views on body grooming for men.

While D6 brought up the influence of his cultural identity, the Italian interviewees, on the other hand, were asked whether the *Bella Figura* (see introduction) has any influence on their consumption of grooming products. Despite I3's extensive use of body products, he seems uncertain about the influence of the *Bella Figura* on the use of grooming products in Italian culture, however, I4 and I5 did not reject the idea. What is more I4 sees the prime motivation in using body products for looking good as part of his impression management, as related to the *Bella Figura*. I3 and some of the other Italian interviewees recognise that traditionally the use of these products has been extensive by both genders compared particularly to the Danish culture where they live now.

¹⁶⁰ Traditional Danish egalitarian code of behaviour

Perhaps this could explain why the *The Stories about Friends and Family* theme that emerged during the interviews was more elaborate on the Italian side. It seemed that the Danes did not have a good overview of their male friends and male family members' grooming rituals. The Italians by comparison had actually a better knowledge of their friends' and family's use and consumption. The stories ranged from general stories about different products for the hair, body and shaving, to more specific stories about eye brow trimming, nail polishing, chest and back shaving, face treatment and beauty salons. Interestingly, most of the Italians referred to eye brow trimming as a special grooming treatment their friends practice.

The Italian stories were in general found to be more elaborate, while the Danes just suspected that some of their friends use more products than they do. What could be possibly understood from this is that perhaps the Danes did actually know of more details, but were just shy to discuss them, or maybe the Danes discuss these details with their friends to a lesser extent than the Italians in order to protect their masculinity. Interestingly though, almost none of the Danish interviewees mentioned any special treatments that they use in order to enhance the body, this indicating that such practices could potentially cross boundaries into feminine territory (or just a reluctance to discuss this in the interview). I3, however, did mention he shaves his back under the influence of his wife, and I3 and D5 were open to the idea of going to beauty centres if their economy allowed it.

Before moving on to the next section, I would like to mention two interesting references made by D1 and I3. I3 mentions that his use of grooming products is different from what he experiences in Denmark:

“... when I was playing football, all the players were Danish... and they were not using any product in particular, they were just using maybe one shampoo or one shower gel for everything, whereas normally I bring three or four different... that was one encounter with the differences between our way of using products and their way of using products...”

He further mentioned that his wife's family finds it strange that he has many grooming products lined up in the bathroom and that he spends a long time in the bathroom. Interestingly, D1's story confirms I3's perception of how Danish men view the products:

“I used to play a lot of soccer [football]... and I mean you just don't sit there in a locker room and discuss products... when I started using skin cream, I had to hide it and I had to go to the bathroom

and put it on there, because I just couldn't put it on in front of all the other guys because that would be a bad thing.”

D1 further mentioned that spending a long time in the bathroom is ‘girly’.

There are a number of issues and understanding which could emerge from these statements, the first being that Danish men are more threatened by the associations that could emerge by the use of different grooming products, such as homosexuality. It could be understood that men's use different grooming products has not yet gained the same acceptance in Danish society as in Italy.

Interestingly, many of the interviewees mentioned that they perceive a difference in use between smaller and bigger towns, which could indicate regional differences as mentioned in the theory chapter on the complexities of culture. These are naturally assumptions and they do not propose a generalisation on how Danish and Italian societies consume and act. They merely show tendencies found in the interviews.

5.1.2 Defending the Masculine Self

I divide the theme of Defending the Masculine Self into two parts: *During the Interview* and *Boundaries for Men*. In *During the Interview*, I refer to the extent to which the interviewee was reluctant in the beginning of the interview to discuss body grooming, compared to the end of the interview, as well as the general level of defensive attitude towards talking about body grooming products and rituals. This indicates the difference between how threatened the two groups generally felt about discussing grooming products, and thus the threat to their masculine identity. As can be seen in the table, a pattern of difference was found between the two groups, indicating that the Danes in general felt more threatened. The main difference between the two groups is that the Danes generally appeared to be less comfortable and secure about discussing such products as compared to the Italian group. If looking at the *Boundaries for Men* in which the interviewees commented on the boundaries between what is considered feminine and masculine products and rituals, it seems that both groups bring up gender issues to a similar extent. Both groups found boundaries for certain attributes of the products and rituals.

D1 and D3 had the most defensive attitude towards discussing these products compared to the other interviewees in two different ways. D1 made it clear in the beginning of the interview that his use of

the products is very little compared to other men. He also mentioned continuously throughout his interview that he 'does not care' much about the use of these products. Interestingly, if looking at his awareness of *Brand Consciousness* and the number of motives he finds in using grooming products, it seems that these products do play an important role in his life. Despite D1 became more open to talk about the products as the interview progressed, it was still important for him to emphasise that he does not care about these products. His general awareness of men's grooming and his own in particular grew during the interview. D3, on the other hand, was closed throughout the entire interview.

By comparison, in the Italian group, I1 and I4 showed a level of defensiveness. To some degree I1 was defensive in that he mentions in the beginning of the interview that his use of the products is basic, but contrastingly it seemed he cares about certain aspects such as products for the hair and perfumes. In general the Italian group's overall attitude towards these products was more consistent throughout the individual interviews than the Danish group who seemed hesitant about how much they should reveal of their relation to body grooming products.

On the other hand, as evident from the table, the theme of *Boundaries for Men* was more consistent between the groups. Generally, the men proclaimed that there are certain boundaries for grooming products and rituals in relation to feminine and masculine aspects. They commented on boundaries relating to *colours, scents, hair, and makeup*. I will relate to some of the more interesting references the interviewees made during the interviews.

Colours

A slight pattern of difference between the Danish and Italian group was found when they were asked to choose between a black coloured Palmolive body product for men and a pink unisex body product. While four out of the Danes immediately preferred the Palmolive for men body product, which had a masculine design, the Italians were more critical as to which of the body products they should choose. The Italians would prefer to examine the scent of the product and investigate its quality first, while the Danes were more interested in the initial appeal. The Danes explained that their preference was due to the more masculine design of the Palmolive product. However, two Danes, D2 and D4 stood out. D2 commented on the Palmolive as follows:

“... The Palmolive is trying to be very raw and tough and have a masculine idea in it. But I think they are overdoing it a bit.”

It seems that some men do not like to have prescribed boundaries by society as to what they can consume or not. This is understood by his following comment from D2:

“... I am not so keen about the idea of having a defined line between products and what kind of sex can use this and what kind of sex can use that.”

In a similar comment concerning scents (elaborated on in the next section) I4 notes:

“... a fragrance for man is too much for man style and for woman it's too much sweet, so a mix is ok.”

These examples show that sometimes an over representation of masculine attributes in products may conflict with the male's freedom to manoeuvre his identity according to certain products and context by limiting his consumption experience.

In regards to defending the masculine self, an interesting aspect came up in D4's interview when he found out the researcher's intent to identify whether grooming products threaten his masculine identity. In response he appeared to try to protect his masculine identity by continuously stating that he sees no problem in boundaries for men and women's products, showing his lack of fear. This is why he received a mark on this aspect.

Scents

It is interesting to see that I3, who is the most extensive user of body care products in the two groups, defines specific boundaries for feminine vs. masculine products and rituals. It can be understood that his need for setting boundaries helps him protect his masculine identity. In regards to scents, for example, he specifically points out that he prefers products without floral scents as he associates them with women's scents. I4 mentioned that he prefers scents that are neither too masculine nor too feminine, in other words balanced, as previously mentioned. Furthermore, in regards to product scents and gender, I3 also notes that he only uses 100% men perfumes: “the ones that I know are for men...”, as opposed to I4 who just wants balanced scents. In a similar remark I1 pointed out that when using a perfume, it has to relate exclusively to his male identity:

“... if it s a product both for men and women it doesn’t characterise me.”

The assumption that could be drawn here is that since perfumes could cross boundaries into female territory, by limiting their consumption to male only perfumes, helps men protect their male identity. Alternatively, as seen in the previous section, ‘only for men’ products can also stigmatise men. However, as Milner and Fodness¹⁶¹ point out, in some cases men and women need to know that the products are theirs.

Hair

In relation to hair, some interesting topics emerged. Some practices were considered more feminine than others. For D1, for example, the most ‘girly’ form of shaving would be the arm pits. For the other men, shaving the chest (but not the back) was considered ‘girly’. I3 admits to shaving his back under the encouragement of his wife, but on the other hand he draws the line at shaving the chest and arm pits. Also I1 seemed to see no problem in shaving his back if he had to, and similarly to I3 he set a boundary for removing chest hair.

Concerning other hair issues, I1 commented on the colouring of grey hair:

“... when I see a 30 year old man with grey hair, I say ok, that is natural. But when I see a woman, a 30 year old woman with grey hair, I say ahh, she would be nicer if she coloured her hair.”

While I1 clearly sets boundaries for hair colouring, the other interviewees do not perceive hair colouring as a boundary between the genders. An example of this is D1, who told about his reliance women’s influence throughout his interview, as seen in the table in regards to *Reference Groups*. He lets the women in his family control his use of hair products in such a way that he enjoys experimenting with his boundaries:

“... when they have something left over [hair colour], they just use it on me [laughing]. I mean, that’s basically how it is.”

D5, on the other hand, experimented with dyeing his hair in different colours in high school as a way of playing with his rebellious youthful identity.

¹⁶¹ Milner and Fodness 1996

Makeup

The issue of makeup was brought up throughout almost all the interviews and all the men saw makeup as crossing a boundary. None of the men would ever consider putting makeup on daily basis. However, certain interesting issues arose in relation to makeup during the interviews.

D1, for example, excludes any occasion where he would put on makeup. However, when he referred to men in the entertainment business, he finds this boundary flexible to change:

“... I could understand why in the videos they would put it [makeup] on the guys and I can choose to a limit understand why he [a Danish singer] would do it, because he has to stand out..... but on regular Danish guys just walking down the street here, no, I would really think it will look very funny, then we would have to be like Goth or something like that.”

This means that in certain contexts, these men see it as socially acceptable to use makeup and therefore not threatening to masculine values. They may see a positive aspect to makeup in which makeup differentiates the individual from the mass, facilitating in building an iconic image.

D3 and D5 associate men who use makeup with metrosexuals. By referring to metrosexuals and differentiating themselves from this group, they secure their masculinity. In contrast though to all the other interviewees who stated they would never use makeup, D5, despite excluding himself from the metrosexual group by referring to their use of makeup, admits to stepping out of his comfort zone when experimenting with makeup one a single night in town. D5 and his friend were testing their boundaries to see what they would achieve by this experiment and found that using makeup attracted some girls during that night.

5.1.3 Perceptions of Masculinity

The last theme to emerge under the abstract category deals with the men's perceptions of masculinity. As both theory and my own results suggest, the perception of masculinity varies from person to person. My results also reveal a pattern of difference between the two groups. I divided this theme into two: (1) men who saw physical aspects relating to the body as part of masculinity

and (2) those who saw beyond physical aspects. The Danes appeared to associate muscles and other physical aspects with masculinity to some extent, while the Italian group sees masculinity as more of a special attitude that comes from within a man and seemed more confident about their views. However, when asked how they perceive masculinity, all the interviewees expressed individual perceptions. I will exemplify some of my understandings by relating to quotes by the men.

If looking at the table and the parameter of *Physical Appearance*, one can notice that the Danish group got higher marks on references to physical appearance in relation to how they could define masculinity. The Italian group, on the other hand, put more emphasis on perspectives other than physical. Four out of the six Danish interviewees mentioned muscles as a first thing to come to their mind when thinking of masculinity. D1 was perhaps the one to put most emphasis on the physical aspect out of all the interviewees. D6, on the other hand, stood out of the Danish group as he, like the Italians, put emphasis on issues other than physical relating to masculinity:

“Maybe I would define it with Clint Eastwood..... because I think it’s... for me masculinity is not about muscles. It is not about looking good and these things. I think that is more feminine actually.”

Contrary to D6 who seemed the most certain about his ideas of what is masculine out of all the Danes, D4 appeared the most insecure:

“...you can always say muscles and a little rough look... but then again... it don’t have to have a lot of muscles to look masculine and... probably something of...that you reflect that you trust yourself and you like yourself and but... you do that too if you look feminine perhaps.”

Interestingly, as a way to show their confidence on how they perceive masculinity, some of the Italians compared Italian masculinity to Danish masculinity by criticising, so to speak, how (as they perceive it) Danish men view masculinity. The Italian respondents notice that Danish men put a lot of emphasis on physical appearance in order to look masculine. I1 notes:

“I find Danish people some very concerned about muscle..... It is not very natural and in my opinion again is not connected to masculinity”

I1 further commented that he finds Danish men who use alcohol in order to fulfil their masculine identity misinterpret what it is to be masculine.

For the Italian group masculinity was described as an attitude, being yourself, being responsible, confident, willing to take confrontations and knowing who you are and how to face life. Those were the main themes to recur among the Italian group. In a way, this could be interpreted as part of the *Bella Figura*, which includes the impression people put on their surroundings.

As understood from this section, each interviewee had a personal view on masculinity, which fits theory in that masculinity is a concept subjected to the mind of every individual. Furthermore, it is evident from the results that there seems to be a pattern which is common to the Italian group as opposed to the Danish group in terms of how they view masculinity. This being a total impression that a man projects, of which the physical aspect is only a part of, as opposed to a focus on purely physical elements. This supports Connell's and Tager and Good's¹⁶² theory on perceptions of masculinity varying from culture to culture. However, there were some Danes who stood out from the group with different opinions, which could also indicate a multiple of views on masculinity within a culture.¹⁶³ The Italian group, on the other hand, was more consistent with their views on masculinity. Interestingly, it can be added that despite almost all the men being repulsed by depictions of muscular bodies, the Danish group still associates muscles with masculinity as a first impression to come to their mind. In a way, this can partly support Grogan's, Kimmel's, Lewis' and Solomon et al.'s¹⁶⁴ theory of influences by media that depict muscular bodies. Perhaps as Grogan suggests, for the Danish group muscles may represent power, strength and aggression,¹⁶⁵ which may secure their masculinity.

5.2 Physical Aspects

5.2.1 Perfumes

Under *Physical Aspects* I found two interesting themes to emerge. The first deals with *Perfumes*, which is included under this aspect as it indirectly relates to the body. *Motivation* is also included here, as the discussion on the motivation aspects relates to the body and self image.

¹⁶² Connell 2002, Tager and Good 2005

¹⁶³ Connell 2002: 89

¹⁶⁴ Grogan 1999, Kimmel 2004, Lewis 2008, Solomon et al. 2006

¹⁶⁵ Grogan 1999: 58

In regards to *Perfumes* I differentiate between *Scent* and *Status*, as these elements relate to the motivation behind using perfumes, which seemed to indicate differences between the Danish group and the Italian group as shown in the table. When generally commenting on perfumes, the tendency among the Danish group seemed to indicate that the majority of the respondents put emphasis on the status by using perfumes as a means for achieving a desired image among their peers and surroundings. The Italian group, on the other hand, seemed to be more concerned with the tangible aspects of perfumes- the actual scent. An earlier discussion on scents and references to boundaries also reveals the Italians' particular interest for scents.

Among the Danish group, D6 put the most emphasis on status in regards to perfumes. D6 openly stated that his use of perfumes is primarily for building a good image among peers:

“... I think it's a little bit about status, perfumes. More status with perfumes than with shampoos. And I also think that perfumes is something that I talk with my friends about.”

It can be understood that the consumption of perfumes for this respondent, signifies status among his peers. This respondent further noted that the brand also plays an important role in his selection of perfumes:

“... I think it's a lot about the brand like for example Hugo Boss and... when I choose perfumes it's a lot about the brand...”

In general it seemed that the Danish group is more concerned about status when using perfumes. This interpretation is established by their references to not going for the cheapest selection, without any references to the tangible qualities of the perfume. Another point proposing this is by their references to using their most expensive perfumes when going out for special occasions:

“... [when asked if he uses products for special occasions] maybe it's some expensive perfumes I don't use daily, but when I'm going out or, yeah” (D6)

“I use Jean Paul Gaultier [for special occasions]... The Ferrari and Fahrenheit is on a daily basis” (D5)

It seems that the Danish group likes to match a special grooming product for special contexts in order to display a different image from the image they display in daily contexts, with the emphasis on using something more expensive or exclusive. Thus, they use perfumes to manipulate the self for

fitting in the right situation or occasion.¹⁶⁶ The contrast between the groups lies in that the Italian group makes little or no reference to using their more *expensive* perfumes in special contexts. This, however, does not rule out the idea that they might use their ordinary perfumes in contexts in which they wish to play on a different identity. For the Italian group, the importance is emphasised on the particular scent of the perfume, and in this way the Italian group seems to be more concerned with the tangible details. When asked what is the most important aspect when choosing a perfume, I2 answered:

“The smell. I won’t bother about the brand. I will just smell”

Throughout I2’s interview, he further put emphasis on scent by referring to other types of grooming products and the importance of their scent when selecting them. I4, for example, noted that he uses perfumes only when going out, but not at home or in a work context. This shows that he would like to present a different identity in a different context.

The discussion on perfumes with I3, on other hand, did not bring up any references to context, but emphasis was rather put on the scent as with I4. I1, for example, stands out of the Italian group to some extent as he referred both to the importance of perfumes for his own pleasure, and thus identity, but also sees the use of perfumes as part of impression management:

“It has to be something that characterise me. First of all it has to be something I like... it help to give an impression sometimes. I don’t take perfume every day, but when I have to take it... it is something that has to characterise me.”

Furthermore, he specifically emphasised the importance of the odour when it comes to selecting perfumes. He stressed that before considering which perfume to buy, he visits the shop in order to scent the product first. Also, he referred to his girlfriend’s influence on the decision of buying perfumes, but stated that without his girlfriend’s influence he would be mostly interested in the scent of the product.

Before moving on, it should be noted that this does not mean that the Danish group necessarily uses more expensive perfumes than the Italian group in general or that the perfumes the Italians use on special occasions are necessarily less exclusive than what the Danish group uses. This comparison is only concerned with how the interviewees describe their use and selection of perfumes.

¹⁶⁶ Solomon et al. 2006, Sturrock and Pioch 1998

If I compare my results to Sturrock and Pioch's¹⁶⁷ findings and the theory of the multiple selves according to Solomon et al.,¹⁶⁸ the findings of this study also reveal that the respondents use perfumes in order to manipulate their different selves according to different contexts. The purpose is to expose a different image in different contexts. In this cross cultural study the general difference between the groups in terms of their use and consumption of perfumes as a type of grooming product, indicates that the Danes are more concerned with the perfume brand or that it is expensive, while the Italians despite also using perfumes for special occasions do not necessarily consider using a more luxurious brand. Instead, the Italians appear to pay more importance to the scent of the product, as it needs to characterise their identity. It can be argued that the Danish group mostly finds use in perfumes for impressing peers, while the Italian group's purpose also and perhaps more relates to extending the self.¹⁶⁹ Perhaps an assumption can be drawn that the Danish group likes to compensate on their insecurities regarding their knowledge of the products and therefore seek to give a better impression by buying more expensive brands.

Other related and interesting aspects that emerged, that were not directly related to perfumes concerned deodorants. D1, for example, told a story of going for the most expensive deodorant in the store. D3 similar to his Danish counterparts mentioned using his expensive brand of deodorant when going out. This correlates well with the use of perfumes described above.

5.2.2 Motivation

In regards to motivation for using grooming products, the following themes came up: *Ageing*, *Attraction*, *Health*, *Hygiene*, and *Good Looks*. Indication for motivation concerning status was found mostly in regards to perfumes and therefore was left for the discussion on perfumes in the previous section. There were no clear patterns of cross cultural differences regarding motivation and use of body grooming products, however, the Danish group compared to the Italian group brought up attraction, while this aspect was not mentioned by the Italians. However, this does not rule out that they may find a correlation between the use of body care products and attraction. In contrast to Sturrock and Pioch's research, my results did not bring up the theme of *An Act of Pleasure* as a

¹⁶⁷ Sturrock and Pioch 1998

¹⁶⁸ Solomon et al. 2006

¹⁶⁹ Solomon et al. 2006

parameter nor as motivation. Basically, only I3 briefly touched upon the use of body products as an act of pleasure, however, not as a prime motivation.

Ageing

Ageing was subtly understood to be a concern to many of the men. Within this theme two types of concerns emerged: concerns for wrinkles and balding. I1 and I2 seemed to be the most concerned about balding, as they were conscious about the possibility of losing hair and therefore invest more in products like shampoos:

“... I have a special shampoo that won a national body care competition... And then I have a normal shampoo.” (I1)

“... I don't want to be bald [laughing], so I try to use a delicate shampoo or something like that.” (I2)

Both of these two Italian interviewees refer here to a special shampoo they use in order to prevent balding in the future.

In relation to wrinkles and other skin problems, D1 and I3 also revealed concerns:

“I have also begun to use pigments around my eyes, because I do a lot of work and don't get enough sleep, so I get black eyes and I think...now I am 29...” (D1)

“... that's also why I use body products and I use face creams and skin tonics, not only because they smell nice but also because I like to prevent aging and skin problems.”(I3)

I3 further related to all the kinds of products that he uses in order to avoid ageing such as face cream, night cream, and cream for the T area, which works for the nose and forehead. D1, on the other hand, further related to his worries about ageing and health concerning how he would like to be presented in his work environment as a teacher. This is elaborated in the Health section below.

In general as understood from the interviews, most of the men are open to the possibility of using anti-ageing products if they were not already using such products. In this sense my results reflect male consumers who seem to follow the postmodernistic trend of being preoccupied projecting

youth and freshness and in turn project a positive image on their surroundings, as discussed by Featherstone and Lewis.¹⁷⁰

Health

Concerning health, D2 finds his prime motive in using body care products in relation to his skin problems:

“... It’s mainly about health I think. But also a bit about appearance. But it is not the main motive that I buy them. The efficiency of the products.”

It is interesting to note though that earlier in the interview, D2 claimed that his use of body products is not about ‘an image thing’, however, in this quote it is understood that another motive for D2 indeed relates to image, and thus good looks. By this D2 seems to contradict himself. Another hint for this contradiction lies in D2’s use of expensive brands, both for maintaining a healthy skin, but also perhaps for achieving a certain status. Both D2 and I4 mentioned that they use special and more expensive shampoos in order to avoid dry hair. Other interviewees like D4 and I1, for example, mentioned some concerns for dry skin and their use of certain products in order to avoid this. Most of the interviewees, on the other hand, interestingly put emphasis on their preference for scented free products, as scented products may hurt their skin. D1 made particular reference to this. This is another cue revealing that the men in this study pay attention to good looking and healthy skin, and thus desiring to achieve a youthful and fresh outer body.

Hygiene

One of the prime reasons for using body products that the respondents liked to emphasise was hygiene. It seems that for many of the interviewees having a proper hygiene is of utmost importance as they would like to maintain a positive image in public. This is evident in D1’s interview, as he related his hygiene concerns to his work as a teacher:

¹⁷⁰ Featherstone 1991, Lewis 2008

“..... as a teacher you are in contact with a lot of people and you stand in front of them all the time, so I figured that I needed to be presentable, I didn't want to be the teacher that always smelled bad or had bad breath...”

D1 uses some grooming products as a way to help him shape the self in a new and uncertain environment.¹⁷¹ As a teacher he wants to transmit a presentable image, as this is important for him in a work context. In another reference to this quote, D1 emphasised that despite his lack of interest in body grooming products as part of defending his masculinity, in certain contexts this interest changes.

D1, D5, I1 and I3 showed particular concern about having a proper scent in public by revealing their stories on trying to find a perfect deodorant in order to protect themselves against bad scent. These concerns about their hygiene show that it is important for the men to maintain a good image in public by the use of a body care product.

Attraction and Good Looks

The remaining subthemes of *Attraction* and *Good Looks* also emerged in this research. If comparing to Sturrock and Pioch's research, it is interesting to note that the motive of attraction was less evident in this study, and by contrast the motive of looking good in public was more common.

Four Danish interviewees brought up attraction as a subtheme. Interestingly, it was difficult to establish whether any of the Italian interviewees had a relation to this subtheme, and therefore it is also rather difficult to draw assumptions as to why this slight difference between the groups appeared. On the other hand, using products to enhance the other body, in other words, good looks, was found to be referred to both among the Danes and the Italians. I4 and I5 received a high mark on this motive, as they rather directly proclaimed good looks to be the main motive for using body care products.

Before proceeding to the next section, an important point in relation to I3's interview should be brought up. I3 in general stood out of all the interviewees, as he had the closest relation to body

¹⁷¹ Solomon et al. 2006: 212-13

grooming products, and in this respect deserves a more elaborate attention to his motivation of using grooming products. I3 in contrast to the other interviewees feels that grooming products are an integrated part of his identity, and in turn these products extend his self:

“..... I don't feel complete in a way if I don't use my face cream, I feel something is missing.”

“..... I can see that body products are necessary for myself because they complete me...”

Furthermore, he is the only interviewee to make a reference to body care products as an act of pleasure. In this way, for I3 the motivation behind using body products compared to the other interviewees goes beyond the other basic motives found to emerge in this research.

5.3 Social Aspects

5.3.1 Types of Men

This theme is divided into three subsections: *Rejecting Metrosexuals*, *Idealising the Übersexual* and *Identifying with the Average Man*. Under this theme I interpret how the interviewees relate to the types of men that are discussed in the theory chapter. Most of the interviewees recognised the global term and trend of metrosexuality, subconsciously identified with the übersexual type of man, even though the actual term was not brought up, and perceived their *actual self*¹⁷² as the average man. This theme also reveals interesting contradictions as noted in the table and a few exceptions marked in grey.

Rejecting Metrosexuals

One of the themes to emerge under *Types of Men* was *Rejecting Metrosexuals* in which I graded the extent to which the men did not identify themselves with metrosexual types. Most of the men did not identify with the metrosexual. The table also indicates a pattern of difference between the two groups, the Danish group being more rejecting. However, the main difference between the groups

¹⁷² Solomon et al. 2006

was found to be more complex. While, the Danish group associates metrosexuality with men who are extensive users of grooming products, it is interpreted that the Italian group mostly associates metrosexuality by men who lose their masculinity. For the Danes, men who use many products (by volume, frequency and cost) are becoming feminine in a way, while the Italians, on the other hand, do not necessarily perceive extensive users as metrosexuals, as according to I3, for example, a man can still preserve his masculine side:

“..... in Italy you are not metrosexual in that way, you are just maybe Italian, you know, you are not classified as metrosexual, but you don't look very feminine maybe. I think guys here... they lose some side of masculinity, they move too much towards the feminine side... Whereas Italians... taking care of their body, you can still see they are men...”

I3 further noted that it is not uncommon for men in Italy to practice a lot of grooming rituals, and indeed the Italians' stories about their male friends and family seem to support this. I3, interestingly, compares Danish metrosexuality to Italian metrosexuality in the following way:

“..... in Italy you are not metrosexual in that way [referring to the exaggeration of the metrosexual trend by Danish men], you are just maybe Italian, you know, you are not classified as metrosexual, but you don't look very feminine maybe.”

Here he sees Danish men who follow the trend to its extreme as stepping too much into feminine territory. The other Italians also commented on the way Danish men style their hair and the way they abuse the trend of metrosexuality.

If looking at D6's answers profile, one can notice that he has been the one most rejecting the metrosexual out of all the interviewees in two ways: by utterly distinguishing himself from the type of men referred to in an English term, 'pretty boys', and by utterly rejecting David Beckham, denounced as a metrosexual type. The table shows that also D3 and D5 referred to the term 'pretty boys' and by this disassociate themselves completely from that type of man, so much that Danish men in this study has found a specific and special term for classifying them:

“..... we actually have a group of guys, a type of guys in Denmark, which on Facebook, for example, there is a group, which I think it's a hate group or something about these guys... But it's like if guys use these products often then it's important for them to look good and skin look good...”

D6 identifies the 'pretty boys' type as a David Beckham type and emphasised that he disassociates himself completely from that type of men, whom according to D6 'has got the only talent that they look good'. What is also interesting to note from the table is that D5 who also related to the term 'pretty boys' and seems to disassociate himself entirely from that group of men raised an interesting issue in his response. D5 clearly seems to think that metrosexuals are the type of men who use too many grooming products and therefore they risk seeming too feminine or gay:

"..... I think if you do too much and go full scale Fabulous Five¹⁷³ you may get the opportunity of people to look at you as gay, or something like that... I don't have any problems with people... or a man doing something about themselves, but to a limit."

"I think after the program of the Fabulous Five... it was more common and acceptable to use [referring to body products], but I don't know if you're metrosexual, you use it more."

What is interesting about D5 is that while he seems to disassociate himself from metrosexuals, he also appears to use body care products to the largest extent out of all the Danish interviewees and admits he considers going to a beauty centre if economy allowed. It is also understood that he may be attracted to shows like the Fabulous Five, which is known for being a show which encourages men to be more self aware, and take more care of grooming practices among the different themes covered in the show. Consequently, metrosexual connotations were ascribed to the series.¹⁷⁴ D5 admitted that he is partly inspired by the show. Interestingly in this respect, D6 brought up reasons for why some Danish men reject metrosexuals, but at the same time see them as an ideal they cannot reach:

"... For some Danish guys I think it's because they are jealous..... So for me I would say, ok, they are pretty boys and that's the way they live... but I think the jealous guys... maybe it's the thing that they are reaching for, to look like that."

This is how D6 interprets the reasons why a hate group was started against the 'pretty boys' on Facebook in Denmark. What can be further interpreted, as it appears that the Danish group in this study rejects metrosexuals more than the Italian group, is that as grooming products for men are not entirely integrated in Danish culture yet, men seem to perceive extensive use of grooming products as a threat to their masculinity. At the same time the group is exposed to global media images, in

¹⁷³ Refers to the American reality series 'the Queer Eye for the Straight Guy' (see introduction)

¹⁷⁴ Coad 2008: 33, Byrnes 2006

which metrosexuality is embraced as a trend. This in turn provokes their actual self to aspire to an ideal self¹⁷⁵ of a metrosexual man who seems to present a perfect ideal which marketers put pressure on men to aspire to.

I3 seems to contradict himself when distancing himself from what he perceives as a metrosexual man. For I3, a metrosexual man is not necessarily a man who uses a lot of grooming products and rituals, as clearly he admits to using many products and practicing rituals himself. Instead I3 would like to distance himself from the type of man who misinterprets the metrosexual trend by overdoing it in such a way that he loses some side of his masculinity. To some extent it can be argued that I3 is distancing himself from metrosexuals, because he himself uses the products extensively and in this way protects his masculinity.

Each individual gave his own interpretation of metrosexual men, whether it was men who use a lot of grooming products or men who have a lot of muscles. The main difference between the groups though lie mainly in the extent to which they rejected these types of men in general in which the Danish men appeared to be more rejecting. The Danish group mainly associated metrosexual men with men who are extensive users of body care products as opposed to the Italian group who put emphasis on *the way* the men use these products, and thus present themselves. Only D4's interview reveals different results in terms of rejecting metrosexuals, as the figure he seemed to idealise the most based on looks among the different images shown to him was David Beckham, the archetypical metrosexual type.

According to the results of the current study, there are different perceptions and interpretations of the classification of the metrosexual as Coad¹⁷⁶ suggests. Like most abstract terms, the different interpretations of metrosexuality make it a complex. Furthermore, Coad¹⁷⁷ argues that metrosexuality can easily be equated to homosexuality, which is evident from the patterns of the Danish men's perception of the term. The Italians, on the other hand, seem to be more concerned with the feminine characteristics a metrosexual type may project without necessarily associating it with homosexuality.

Idealising the Übersexual

¹⁷⁵ Solomon et al. 2006

¹⁷⁶ Coad 2008

¹⁷⁷ Coad 2008

In regards to the übersexual type, it seemed that this type was consistently idealised by many of the interviewees. In this sense my results support the trend that suggests that the metrosexual man has been perhaps overly represented as a type who is leaning too much towards feminine values. Perhaps the übersexual type is the type of man Byrnes¹⁷⁸ refers to in her article as a type of man who falls in between the extremes of the metrosexual and retrosexual. When asked to point a type of man they would idealise with, the interviewees usually pointed at the types in the following figures (see figures 2. and 3.), who were shown as representatives of übersexual types:



Figure 2. Man number 6. The researcher's example of an übersexual type. From Esquire April 2009.

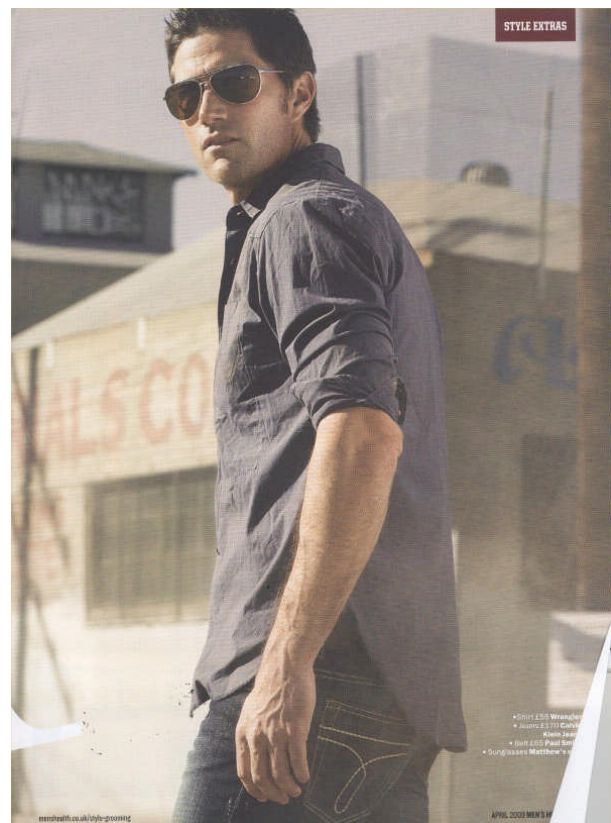


Figure 3. Mathew Foxx. Another of the researcher's examples of an übersexual type. From Men's Health, April 2009.

D2 explains his choice of idealising with Clive Owen, a Hollywood actor. He basically describes an übersexual type:

¹⁷⁸ Byrnes 2006

“I think he looks really natural, but still he has that, that kind of skin that look what I was trying to define before. It’s still masculine... for a body care product I would definitely look more into that”

According to D2’s interview, it can be further understood that the main appeal in the übersexual type lies in that men do not see any tendencies towards a feminine side, and in this sense he is a safe man to idealise. He is a man that takes care of his looks, yet seems confident about not losing his masculine side. There were interviewees, however, that stood out of the two groups, namely D6 and I1, as they may have idealised the übersexual less, but rather the traditional type.

Identifying with the Average Man

Most of the men rejected men who did not seem natural, whether having too many muscles or just seeming too perfect. In this way the interviewees rejected the muscular ideals, and this contradicts Grogan’s and Kimmel’s¹⁷⁹ theory that both genders are fixated on muscular bodies. Furthermore, according to Wienke’s study (1998) (see section 4.3.1), the men’s reactions to muscular bodies in this study were found to be mostly of the type rejecting it and seeing it as unrealistic expectations. On the other hand, the men repeated that they identify with men who look relaxed, casual, normal and natural, and this was understood to be the average looking man. It is further interesting to note that when asked who they identify with from the different pictures, the interviewees differentiated between personalities, the actual self and ideal self. In regards to personalities, D1, for example, identified with Woody Allen based on personality. Interestingly, the pictures of the, to the common observer, less attractive men, did not seem to be rejected by most of the men. Those who rejected these types often referred to their hair, weight and general appearance. When those who did not fully reject the supposedly less attractive men were asked whether these men could be presented in ads for body care products, they replied that probably this would not be appropriate for these types of products.

I3 stood out the most in relation to identifying with the average man, as he emphasised that he does not perceive himself as such:

¹⁷⁹ Grogan 1999, Kimmel 2004

“It looks too much like the product [the Palmolive for Men] the standard man would use. I mean when I say a standard man, I mean the man that doesn’t really pay attention to his body, he just buys something that is quite cheap...”

Later I3 classifies this type of man as the gym man. It can thus be interpreted that I3 sees himself as a conscious consumer when it comes to body care products. For I3, the act of consuming better body care products differentiates him from the average man, and thus facilitate in defining his identity.

To conclude this section, it is understood that the men of both nationalities identify most with average looking men and see them as their actual self, while the übersexual signifies the ideal they would like to achieve. Interestingly though, some of the interviewees also emphasised that in order for them to idealise with a certain man, the man should have a level of flaws, as it is understood that the men do not want to see a man who is too distant from their actual self in ads.

5.3.2 Influence of Reference Groups

It was found that two types of groups have an influence on the way the men in this study consume body grooming products: *Women* and *Peers*. When referring to women, the interviewees usually mentioned the role their girlfriend play on their consumption patterns, or generally relying on women’s knowledge regarding body grooming products. When referring to peers, the interviewees related to the importance of the way they are being perceived by their peers.

Women

As can be seen in the table almost all the interviewees had some kind of reference to the influence of women. I2’s interview was the only interview in which women’s influence on his consumption patterns did not come up, possibly because he currently does not have a girlfriend. D6 neither has a girlfriend currently, however, he mentioned that he would rely on a woman’s opinion in a shop if he had to buy a grooming product. In this section I will refer to the more interesting topics that have emerged in relation to women.

As can be seen in the table, D1 and D5 received the highest marks for their relation to women's influence. D1 is highly influenced by the women in his family, particularly referring to his girlfriend, while D5 appears to be both highly influenced by his girlfriend, but particularly by his mother who is a hairdresser. D1's stories range from his girlfriend influencing his perfume choices to influencing his choices on different appliances for the skin. He seems to heavily rely on her choices and appears insecure about making any decisions regarding his consumption behaviour of body care products without consulting her first. Furthermore, there is evidence for his reliance on women's opinion when it comes to his consumption choices in the following quote:

“Biotherm... in my family the women are a big fan of that and they think that their creams are very good... I buy that because I could relate that to some women who thought that was ok and I figured then it will probably be ok for me too...”

D1 is gradually integrating in the world of grooming products, therefore reacting defensively to his use of the products. He appears to carefully choose his products according to the female segment's knowledge, as he recognises this segment as being traditionally involved in the consumption of grooming products.

D5 also admitted to his girlfriend's role in his consumption decisions. However, the person whose influence he mostly seems to rely on is his mother's. As D5's mother is a hairdresser made him more secure about experimenting with different hairstyles throughout the course of his life, and what is more, have a special relation to hair products. Here are two of the more interesting quotes by D5:

“I don't go outside the door without having done something to my hair. If I don't, I use a cab [laughing].”

“Even though she [the mother] is living on Sjælland, I don't expect to see any of her customers up here, but still I... it's one of the main things”.

As understood, D5 feels a pressure to do something about his hair as his mother is a hair dresser. What is even more interesting from the second quote is that he does not want to embarrass his mother in front of her clients as a son who is not taking care of his hair. By this he wishes to protect his mother's image as a hairdresser.

I4 got a mark for contradicting his reference to women, as he pointed out that his girlfriend does not influence his choices. However, it seems to be understood from his interview that his girlfriend's preference for purchasing grooming products at small scale stores such as pharmacies and health stores makes him more involved in higher quality products and brands. The Italian group, on the other hand, referred constantly to the big role Italian women play on men's consumption of grooming products and rituals. It was not clear though whether they perceive Italian women's role on men's consumption to be higher than Danish women's role. In both groups, however, the interviewees implied that their partners and their friends' partners encourage them to use certain products and take on certain grooming rituals. For example, I3 mentions his wife's influence when it comes to choosing brands and practicing rituals like shaving the back. I2 tells a story about his friend's partner who encourages him to take artificial sun tanning. All the interviewees' partners were Danish, and all the interviewees from both groups appeared to be influenced by women to some extent.

Peers

Most of the interviewees appeared to care about how they are perceived by their friends. There are no indications of their peers directly influencing their choices according to what was said, however, it seems that some of the interviewees care highly about the opinion of their peers and surroundings in front of whom they would like to keep a good image. It is considered though that the interviewees' friends do indeed influence their consumption choices of body care products more directly, but perhaps the interviewees did not want to admit this. Interestingly, the interviewees claimed that usually they do not discuss and exchange ideas with their friends about such products, however, in some of the interviews there were slight hints that these products are indeed discussed among men. In D6's interview, for example, this influence is more apparent than in the other interviews:

“...With perfumes I actually think it also has to do with my friends, because when we talk about it we use the same.”

D3 also makes an interesting reference to his friends' influence concerning the use of perfumes:

“... if I go to a party I use the expensive one... and I think it’s important to use it and everybody else is also using it.”

Apart from peers, I3, for example, mentioned the inspiration he got from his brothers for using different body care products when he was younger. In relation to the importance the interviewees put on how they are perceived by their peers, one can again relate to I3’s and D1’s stories about the locker rooms presented in the section on references to culture. Furthermore, D1 and D5 also related to the inspiration they receive, for example, from the media, D1 observing what works for men on TV, and D5 observing reality programs like the *Queer Eye*.

5.3.3 Social Groupings

In relation to social groupings, I refer to the type of social groups the men feel they belong to, and which to some extent play a role on their relation to grooming products. These groups are divided into: *Age* and *Profession*. By referring to age, what is meant is that the interviewees feel that their age plays a role on their perception of grooming products and behaviour. By referring to profession, what is meant is that their type of profession plays a role on their grooming patterns.

Age

In reference to age, D3 and I5, for example, appears to be affected by the age group they perceive they belong to. I5 who is the oldest among the two nationality groups, 33, was the only interviewee to claim that his use of body care products decreased as he got older. He generally made several references to his age influencing his consumption and use. When asked to choose which men he could identify with from the pictures, he related to men that represent his age group. He rejected some of the other men by stating:

“... the others are very young, and I’m not so young anymore, so...”

This could indicate that age in this case could be an overriding factor in his choice of preferred male type or at least an influence.

Contrastingly, D3 liked to associate himself with young men when he was shown the pictures. For example, when asked which ad he could relate to, he did not seem to appreciate the perfume ads that did not have an image of a young man:

“... I can’t associate myself... eh, I can’t see if this one is for old guys or young guys...”

D3 also mentioned that he could not associate himself with the pictures of the older men, like for example, Sean Connery despite whom he admires.

Profession

Another factor that appears to influence the men’s grooming patterns in this study is their type of profession or future profession. Only two interviewees made specific references to this matter, while the other interviewees who are mostly students emphasised that while they are in the student environment at university, they pay less attention to the use of these products. D1 and D5 were the two to stand out the most in relation to their professional environment.

D1 put emphasis on the meaning of being a teacher to his use of body care products:

“... When I was studying I was just myself and I was just sitting there with all the other students, but now I am the figure in the centre and I know there are a lot who are looking at me, so it was definitely not to impress, but it was just to be presentable, my aim was to be presentable.”

D1 refers here to his growing interest in grooming products, since he started working as a school teacher. Through the use of grooming products, he hopes to enhance his outer body, and project a figure that reflects confidence and authority. In his professional environment, it is important for D1 to create a self image which his students could look up to and admire, and grooming products seem to facilitate in completing this desire. Despite D1’s defensive approach towards the products, it seems that in certain contexts these products serve less of a threat to his masculine self, if at all. Another interesting point D1 referred to is being a student. D5 makes a similar point:

“.....when you’re at the university you don’t... you don’t have the same connection with customers and you don’t have to be that presentable when you are with your group mates...”

Interestingly, some of the other respondents also pointed out that when being a student, one pays less attention to how one is presented among surroundings. D5 similar to D1 pointed out that it is very likely that his use and consumption of body grooming products will change, once he is out in his professional surroundings:

“... when you’re at a working place... you do something about yourself when you’re talking with customers it’s... you are the image of that firm, so... especially in my occasion I’ll probably be working in a bank, so...”

D5 as a student of economics stated that he expects his use of grooming products to change once he enters the labour market. In this way, grooming products would play a role in serving the purpose of building a desired and appropriate image in front of his surroundings. Moreover, D5 related mostly to the images of business type looking men and the ones who seemed to make money. Interestingly, he pointed out that he would identify with the picture of a man who resembles Stein Bagger.¹⁸⁰ (See figure 4.).

¹⁸⁰ Stein Bagger was involved in a major Danish case of fraud in 2008

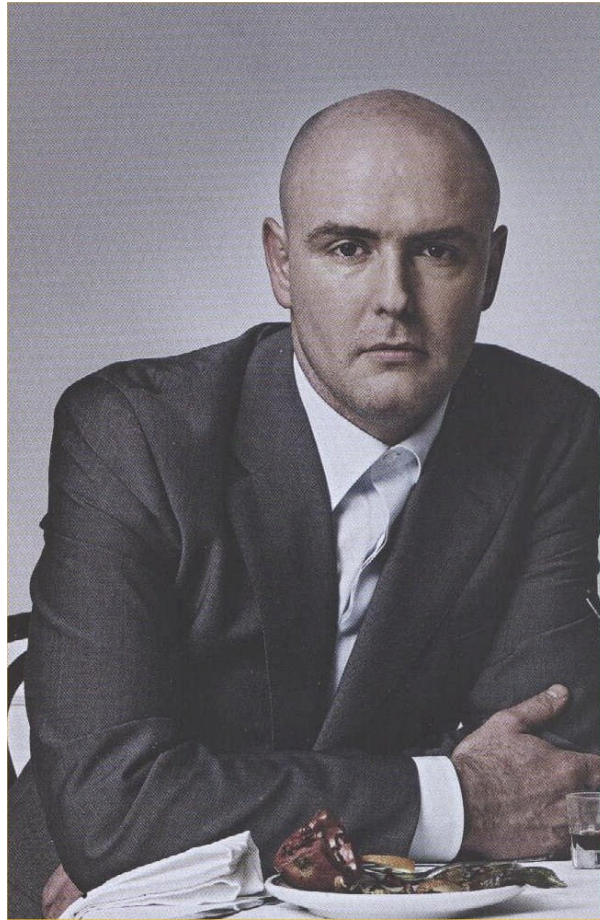


Figure 4. The picture of a man who according to D5 looks like a business type. From Men's Health, April 2009.

5.3.4 Recognition of Men's Grooming and Brands

One of the final interesting themes to emerge from the interviews are the men's awareness of the trend of growing market for men's grooming products and rituals on a global level. In addition, it was interesting to observe how much the men knew of brands and recognised them. It is safe to say that all of the men notice the global trend of the growing market for grooming products for men. Some related more to their awareness than others. Overall it can be interpreted that as the men observe that it is gradually becoming accepted for men to take more care of their bodies by the use of grooming products, they feel more comfortable and free to talk about their use of the products. What is more, it is understood that some of the men in this study are even intrigued and attracted to the trend. It appears that it is more important for the Danish men that grooming products for men are gradually becoming socially accepted in society:

“..... I think that’s society and general opinion about the things are becoming more accepted... more products on the market and the commercials are definitely going more for them, the man side, so I think it’s just becoming more and more regular...” (D4)

Here, D4 answers the researcher’s question on whether he thinks his use of grooming products has changed during the course of his life, and therefore it can be understood that societal changes had an effect on his consumption patterns.

D2 makes the following comment:

“..... there are a lot of homosexuals in Britain as I see it, and therefore people are more into it and trying to look good and it is more acceptable what you do and how you look in Britain, I think.”

It can be understood that it is important for D2 that the extensive use is socially accepted in society. In this comment it can be further subtly understood that he relates the extensive use of grooming products by men in Britain as a phenomenon associated with homosexuality. However, this raises another issue which is rather difficult to interpret, as D2 also remarked the following:

“... I definitely think there is a fear among men becoming a bit too feminine, but... I don’t think the homosexual part of it is a direct fear”

D1, on the other hand, was the only interviewee to admit that he fears of the homosexuality part to some extent. But what is interesting about D1 is that at the same time he seems to be intrigued by the trend and is also partly influenced by it:

“Some years ago there was the talk about the metrosexuality, that it is ok for guys to take care of themselves and use products... I think that was in the media, I don’t think it went to the average person straight away..... I think it has taken some years to see oh maybe I can try this maybe I can try that...”

The last two quotes seem to indicate that perhaps Danish men associate extensive use of body care products with homosexuality or metrosexuality, and that the terms are sometimes blurred. And again, it can be understood that for the Danish men it is perhaps more important that the use of the products by men is socially accepted by society and peers.

The Italian group also recognises the increase in grooming products for men. The Italians, compared to the Danish group, as discussed in an earlier section, seem to feel less threatened by

discussing the products and sharing their stories. The Italians appear to be surer that this phenomenon is now socially accepted and that a man is not considered to be feminine if he uses these products extensively. It is interesting to note in this connection that while some of the Danes associate terms like homosexuality and metrosexuality with grooming products, what is important for the Italians is that men do not abuse the use of grooming products by becoming too feminine.. That the Italian group perceives grooming products as less threatening, could be perhaps exemplified by I3's comments:

"... I think it's common knowledge to use these products [referring the use in Italy], it's not strange, or you are not feminine if you use these products, so it's normal that men use creams and use skin tonic for example, it's not looked down at."

"... I think they [Italian men] know that it's normal to do it. Maybe some men exaggerate or might use too many products... but in general it's accepted."

This could indicate that traditionally in Italian society it is common for men to take care of their bodies with grooming products, and in this way this meets my preconceptions on Italian men's relation to grooming products.

Finally, the theme of recognition of brands raised an interesting point. The researcher was surprised to find that most of the men knew of many brands. What is even more, the researcher who is female, and belongs to the segment group who is supposed to be well acquainted with grooming products, learned more about new brands from the interviewees. I3 received the highest score on his recognition as he is the most extensive user of the products out of all the interviewees and seems to be aware of many brands. As mentioned before, a difference between the groups lies in that the Italian group seems to be more familiar than the Danish group with different grooming rituals men go through.

6. Discussion and Summary of Findings

Looking at the overall results from the analysis, I can deduce that both common patterns of consumption and contrasting cultural patterns have emerged. I will first discuss the common patterns that have emerged and imply their importance in relation to theory. I will then discuss the contrasting cultural elements and again discuss their relevance in terms of theory. Finally, I will propose how my results can challenge further research and studies on men's consumption of grooming products from a marketing perspective.

6.1 Common Patterns

The respondents come from a similar social background that is mostly students, teachers and other white collar professions. This could perhaps explain to some degree the many similarities found among the men and the two groups as to their consumption and relation to grooming products. Another explanation could perhaps support the essentialist view on gender and biology as pre-given codes by which a certain gender, female or male, act.

In particular, it was found that the men hold similar views in terms of body image and how society depicts muscular bodies as the ultimate body men should achieve. Both groups were repulsed by the idea of perfection and revealed some insecurity about their bodies. Moreover, in both groups it was found that body grooming facilitates in shaping the outer body which extends the subjects' identity. Thus, a narcissist post modern obsession with body looks¹⁸¹ is reflected in the results of this study. Another important common parameter which was found dealt with types of men. As understood from researching articles, marketers point out at a new type of man that should appeal to the average man, namely the übersexual. As the two groups of men interviewed are rather homogenous in terms of social background, it is perhaps no wonder they selected to idealise the übersexual type on an average basis. The übersexual type exposes a type of man who is concerned about his physical appearance which coincides with the modern fashion of obsessing with the body and narcissism, and at the same time is a type that does not venture too far into feminine territory, which appears to be a universal and important value for all the men in this study. In this respect the results

¹⁸¹ Featherstone 1991, Lewis 2008, Sturrock and Pioch 1998

expose a similar core value in relation to Synovate's study¹⁸² that 'men just want to be men'. However, this study in contrast to Synovate's study perhaps more clearly defines what this core value is about: not risking losing the masculine self and finding the boundaries which men view is stepping too closely into feminine values as seen on the section on *Boundaries for Men* in the analysis.

Another interesting common aspect to emerge was the awareness the men had of the growing industry of men's grooming and other men's growing attention to grooming products respectively. This could perhaps explain why most of the men were generally open about discussing their consumption and use of grooming products. The background chapter to the theory on grooming products and gender prepared the interviewer, for that the men generally would instinctively associate body care products with feminine values and attributes, and thus keep a distant relationship to the products. However, the results seemed to indicate otherwise. The media and societal changes expose the male consumer, whether he is Italian or Danish, to the fact that it is becoming accepted for men to take more care of their bodies with the use of grooming products and rituals. The findings also reveal that for the Italian group whether grooming products for men are socially accepted is of less concern than for the Danish group. This could hint at the idea that perhaps in Denmark the trend is newer and that Italian men have been practising these rituals for a longer period of time. This is supported by the stories of the Italian men that suggest the extent to which their friends are already integrated in the different rituals. Nonetheless, the background chapter also suggests that men have moved one step forward in terms of their relationship to grooming products and this is clearly reflected in the results from both groups. What is more, the men's familiarity with many brands and products further reveals their warming relation to the products. It is important to mention in this connection that some of the men also distinguished between different types of products and rituals, some appearing more feminine to them than others, like for example lip balm products and shaving certain areas of the body like arm pits.

In terms of social references, it was found that the men are commonly influenced by women as well as by peers. Women seem to have the influence of encouraging the men to try different products and rituals. When it comes to peers, it seems that the men care highly about how they are perceived by their peers. For example, not appearing feminine or homosexual as understood by D1's story about the locker room, or having the right perfume brand for achieving status as understood to be

¹⁸² Synovate 2008

the case with the Danish group. In any case, there was a consistent pattern among the two groups to these two relations.

Age and type of profession also seem to play an important role in men's consumption of grooming products according to these two groups. It appears that the men would like to identify with men who seem closest to their age group. Furthermore, having a particular profession seems to influence some of the men's use of grooming products as well as using products to enhance a self image, which is compatible to their profession.

Finally, common patterns are also found in relation to motivation. Similar motivations for using body grooming products were brought up in both groups.

Before concluding this section, it is also important to point out as theory predicted that the men's attitudes to these products vary a great deal according to personality. This is reflected by the grey colour some of the men received in the table, which indicates their answers to be different from the others. Their perception of masculinity is another indicator, which also supports theory when discussing masculinity as a concept which is socially constructed and subjected to the individual's mind.

Conclusively, it can be argued that some of the common aspects found, and in particular the men's awareness of the growing trend of men's grooming, point at a type of global fashion system and culture which homogenises the male consumer, so to speak. Men as a cultural consumer group share common insecurities, protecting the masculine self to some extent, and feeling the need to conform to social pressures, just to name some common aspects. However, as the discussion on culture and goods suggests, an individual's culturally constituted world exists on different levels, meaning that men do not only belong to the sub cultural group of men, but are also part of an age group culture and an occupation group culture.

6.2 Contrasting Patterns

As there was also a fair share of contrasting patterns between the two groups, despite the men coming from a similar hierarchical structure in society, could indeed point at a cross cultural pattern of difference between the Italian and Danish groups. Again, it is important to mention that this

study cannot be representative for all Italian and Danish men, but rather may suggest interesting patterns to be aware of when looking further into Italian and Danish men's consumption habits of grooming products.

As discussed in the theory by e.g. Connell and Tager and Good,¹⁸³ not only is masculinity subjected to the perception of every individual, but also varies from culture to culture. The results indeed reveal a certain difference between the two groups of men. In terms of what the two groups perceive as masculine, it seems the Danish group leans more towards perceiving masculinity in some physical aspects, in contrast to the Italian group who mainly sees masculinity as an attitude and approach that comes from within a man's inner self.

In terms of defending the masculine self and perception of masculinity, it was common to both groups that the men feel threatened by certain dimensions of grooming products and rituals. However, the contrast lies in that the Danish group seems to be less familiar with rituals men may go through than the Italian group, and therefore this could indicate that men's relation to grooming products in Italy is better established. It can be argued, that as Danish men seem less familiar and integrated in the knowledge of grooming rituals, which are traditionally known for having feminine attributes, the products and rituals serve more of a threat to the Danish group. This is naturally an assumption. However, it can be said that there are indications in the results to support this as according to the stories of both D1 and I3 suggest that men who use many kinds of grooming products is considered awkward in Denmark. What is more, it was clear that the Italians had more stories about their friends' and family's grooming practices. It can thus be deducted why the Danes were to a larger extent trying to defend their masculine self during the interviews. This is found to be one of the more obvious differences to emerge between the groups.

Apart from views on masculinity deferring to some degree, contrasting patterns were also found in the metrosexual type's depiction, which seem to threaten the Danish group's masculine identity to a larger extent than the Italian group. What is more as masculinity is socially constructed, so has the term metrosexuality found to be socially and culturally constructed. There was a difference on how the two groups perceived metrosexuality. For the Danes, this concept is associated with a man who just uses grooming products to an extensive degree, while for the Italians metrosexuality is understood not to be necessarily connected to extensive use of grooming products. Perhaps this is because the Italians perceive masculinity as an abstract phenomenon that comes from within a

¹⁸³ Connell 2002, Tager and Good 2005

person regardless of physical looks, and this therefore perhaps makes them look at metrosexuality more as the way it is projected. Again, differences in the rejection of metrosexuals between the groups are also subjected to the differences between the groups in terms of defending the masculine self.

Another distinct difference to emerge regards the selection of perfumes. While the Danes emphasised brand and luxurious elements to prioritise their perfume selection, the Italians seemed to be more concerned with the tangible elements of scenting the product first for prioritising their selection. In general the scent of grooming products seems to be a high priority with the Italian group.

As there seems to be contrasting cultural patterns, it could be interesting to look further into how men in different cultures consume and relate to grooming products. It seems that grooming products and rituals again reflect a culturally constituted world, as Italian men's relation is influenced by the way the men consume these products in their country of origin. As grooming products and rituals may have not been adapted completely in the social world of the Danish male consumer, the products on this market reflect a different culturally constituted world. Looking at both the common and contrasting patterns, it can be said that the products both reflect a global and local fashion system.

6.3 Summary of Main Findings

The following points summarise the main findings of the common patterns and differences.

Summary of common patterns:

- Body image
- Types of men:

Ideal self: Übersexual

Actual self: Average man

- Do not risk losing the masculine self by going too far into feminine territory

- Boundaries for certain products and rituals
- Awareness of the growing acceptance of men's grooming
- Influence from particularly women, but also from peers
- Age and profession influence grooming
- Large variation in perception of masculinity
- Similar motivations for consuming grooming products

Summary of differences:

- Social acceptance less concern for Italians
- Italians have more stories from friends and family about grooming
- Danes are less familiar with grooming rituals and seem more threatened by the products
- Danes were to a larger extent trying to defend their masculine self during the interview
- Metrosexuality is more threatening to Danes than to Italians
- Danes see metrosexuality as using grooming products extensively, Italians see it as being too feminine
- Danes see masculinity primarily as a physical thing, Italians see it as an attitude and approach
- Danes emphasised brand and cost when choosing perfume, Italians emphasised scent

6.4 Implications

As expected the results show that a man is influenced by different layers of social and cultural structures, which affect his consumption patterns. Therefore it makes it rather challenging for marketers to reach a large group of male consumers without considering different factors such as, the culture of a country, a social group (e.g. age, profession etc.) and types of men. What is more the results of this study also indicate that each individual's perception, and thus consumption patterns are unique. In a global world, changes are occurring rapidly and therefore marketers need to reassess and update market research constantly, as the school of social constructivism would

agree on. For example, changes are indeed reflected in this study if compared to Sturrock and Pioch's¹⁸⁴ research from more than ten years ago. My results reveal a great awareness by the men to the growing trend of men's grooming, and new themes such as discussed in 'types of men' seem to affect the way the men view grooming products. As the metrosexual and übersexual are concepts and trends, which have emerged over the past decade, it was naturally not brought up in Sturrock and Pioch's research. Another interesting aspect which was brought up in this study, contrasts in part Milner and Fodness'¹⁸⁵ theory that men and women like to feel that the products are theirs, as some of the men were turned off by 'only for men' product appeals. This implies that the male is a conscious consumer who does not wish to fall for commercial tricks and be segmented into a 'special' type of consumer.

With such complex results, the question remains then, what kind of marketing strategies should marketers consider based on the results of this study? How should they appeal to the Italian male consumer vs. the Danish male consumer? Should the marketing strategies be different at all in the first place when marketing cross culturally? Perhaps they should concentrate more on selling the 'right' type of man to the right male segment group? The aim was to learn from an interpretivist approach, deeper relations and understandings of the male consumer's world according to grooming products in a cross cultural setting. It turns out that both common patterns and cultural patterns were found. If looking at the most important common aspect found, it can be said that the men all relate to a type of man who projects masculinity, confidence, interest in self care, and who does not have a perfect body figure, in other words, meeting the übersexual characteristics. The übersexual type projects universal values that the men could relate to. That is taking care of the body and preserving a good image without any tendencies towards femininity. This was apparently something all the men could relate to, which from an essentialist point of view can suggest that marketing of grooming products for men should focus on selling images of this type of man in future advertising and marketing. However, it is essential to point out that the übersexual type is an emerging trend just like the metrosexual was in the beginning of the decade. Trends and thus changes occur rapidly and constantly. This supports the social constructivist view of time changing trends.

If marketers are to sell a perfect looking metrosexual type then they would have to consider what is an accepted metrosexual type in each culture, as it seems according to this study, that the men from the two groups have different perceptions on this aspect. Perhaps an accepted metrosexual type in

¹⁸⁴ Sturrock and Pioch 1998

¹⁸⁵ Milner and Fodness 1996

the Danish male consumer's mind could have a more enhanced physical appeal, while for the Italian male consumer a metrosexual could look like a man who uses many grooming products, but one who is confident about his masculine identity. However, if marketers wish to reach the average man in different markets, it seems necessary to not step too close into feminine territory. The main challenge for marketers if implementing a cross cultural campaign would be to find out how different grooming products threaten the masculine pride, as it seems that in the case of Danish men, an image of overuse reflects feminine values, and therefore the Danish group in this study feels more threatened from the products.

If marketers wish to use opinion leaders to supplement a marketing campaign, then according to this study it was found that women and peers play an important role. But perhaps women even more. For both groups of men, it is found that women's opinion on the products is highly valued, and women therefore appears to be an opinion leader segment which can solicit the male consumer's consumption patterns on a cross cultural level.

The introduction of this study synthesises a problem, which questions whether the male consumer should be treated as a homogenous segment. The results reveal that it is indeed possible to concentrate on a sub male segment within the male segment to which marketers can sell standardised images which should work on a cross cultural level. This perhaps also explains why many common aspects were found in this study, as the men come from similar social backgrounds. On the other hand, what the results also suggest is that there are differences in cross cultural patterns which should be taken notice for. Furthermore, marketing research needs to be updated constantly as new opportunities may arise all the time due to the changing relation of men to grooming products. And if looking at culture as a dynamic process, so may changes occur constantly in local markets, as the results hint that the Danish male consumer is gradually opening up to the world of grooming products for men.

7. Conclusion

This thesis introduced a potential problem of treating the male consumer as a homogenised group. A cross cultural research was therefore to examine the consumption patterns and perceptions of two male segments from two different countries. Issues pertaining to culture, masculine identity and body image were observed in order to compare and contrast the two segments. Both patterns of similarities and differences were established and discussed. This cross cultural research was done through qualitative interviews with 6 Danish and 5 Italian men. The subjects were interviewed for approximately 45 to 60 minutes on their perception of grooming products, masculinity and body image. The in-depth interviews explored new and revealing information that has perhaps not been found before in relation to men and grooming. I will now conclude on the main findings and answer my main research questions.

The men from both groups had different views on how they perceive masculinity in general and their masculine self. This supported theory according to e.g. Connell.¹⁸⁶ Masculinity was perceived as an attitude, as confidence, as responsibility and muscles to name a few of the perceptions. Cross cultural patterns of difference were found between the two groups, with the Italians putting more emphasis on the abstract aspects than the physical aspects as opposed to the Danish group. The views, however, were also subjected differently to each individual's mind. It was also commonly found that the men in both groups set certain boundaries for consumption and use of products in order to maintain their masculinity, as some products and perceptions of rituals cross too far into boundaries that are considered feminine. Nevertheless, the men in the two groups showed a different level of confidence on how they perceive their masculine self. The Italian group seemed more secure about their perceptions of masculinity as opposed to the Danish group. Grooming products for men as a whole and as a concept threatened the masculine security of the Danish group to larger extent than the Italian group. Thus, it was found that grooming products interacted differently with the men's masculine identity.

Theory suggested that western depictions of the ideal male body and the era of body and narcissism should affect the men's consumption of body care products. As the results suggested, the men were

¹⁸⁶ Connell 2002

repulsed by some of the depictions of those ideals, as it seemed to suppress the actual perception of their bodies. According to the men's statements they do not strive to achieve muscular ideals, neither achieve the perfection that marketers try to depict in the metrosexual type of man. Most of the men perceived their bodies and their selves to match the standards of the average man. If they could idealise a certain type of man, it would be the übersexual type who is confident about his masculinity while at the same time maintaining good looks and attention to body grooming. As most of the men did not perceive themselves as the type of men who overly invests in grooming, most were found as not extensive users of body care products. Society's fixation on youthful and healthy bodies, termed as the narcissistic era, on the other hand, seemed to affect the men's consumption of body grooming products. The men seem to take part in this type of narcissistic culture. Interestingly, even though most of the men stated that they are not extensive users of the products, they seem to use a variety of body care products in order to achieve and maintain healthy and young bodies. The different functions and use they found in these products indicate their concerns for following the footsteps of a western culture that creates worries about e.g. ageing and health. The motivations that were found for the use of grooming products can be summed up as follows: *ageing, health, hygiene, attraction and good looks*. The products that were found to reach these goals were e.g. anti-wrinkle creams to reduce the process of ageing, body and hand creams that avoid dry and unhealthy looking skin, shampoos that avoid dry hair and balding, special deodorants that keep a good hygiene etc. For *attraction* and *good looks*, the interviewees did not mention the specific products that would help them achieve those domains. Furthermore, it was found that some of the interviewees manipulated the image they wanted to portray when caring more for grooming when needing to fit in certain contexts like work and going out. As part of a motivation factor, the Danes, for example, found use of expensive perfumes to reach status among their peers. Thus, the motivation factors relate in some way to how the interviewees perceive their bodies by finding needs to complete or extend the perception of their bodies by the use of grooming products.

The third notion I should conclude on, relating to the men's consumption and perception of the products, is culture. This research is supposed to answer whether any patterns of cultural differences were found between the two groups and why. The common patterns have been discussed above. As to the differences, some indeed were found and were summarised in the discussion chapter. The prime differences were found in *the Italian stories of male friends' and family's rituals and*

consumption of grooming, defending the masculine self during the interviews, perceptions of masculinity and the different concerns when purchasing perfumes.

The Italian group revealed that their Italian male acquaintances are engaged in different grooming products as well as rituals, the products being a variety of facial appliances, and the rituals ranging from practices such as eye brow trimming, facial treatments, hair removal to artificial sun tanning. The Danish group, on the other hand, did not reveal any stories of their male acquaintances' consumption and practices. Different assumptions were drawn as to why. Overall the researcher established that grooming products are less integrated in the male consumer's world in Denmark, and therefore the Danish group generally seemed more threatened by discussing the products. This correlates to the interpretation of the Danish group's defensive attitude during the interviews. This is only assumed, and the aim here is to point at a potential pattern in the Danish male consumer's world. To strengthen the assumption, it was also found that it is more important for the Danish group that the practices and consumption of the products are socially accepted.

The perception of masculinity on the Italian side pointed in the direction of attitude, while on the Danish side, it pointed at physical aspects. Apart from different perceptions of masculinity, the groups were differing on perceptions of metrosexuality to some extent as expected if referring to Coad's theory.¹⁸⁷ The Danes saw it as using grooming products extensively, while the Italians saw it as being too feminine. As the Danish group was generally found to be more threatened by the products and associated metrosexuality with extensive use of the products, it could explain why they were found to be more threatened by metrosexuality than the Italian group. Finally, another prominent difference was found in the concerns when purchasing perfumes. The Danes emphasised brand, luxury and the attractiveness of expensive perfumes when considering the purchase, while the Italians were foremost concerned with the scent of these products, as well as the scent of other grooming products in general.

This research brings up a number of relevant and interesting issues for further studies and research on men's use and consumption of grooming products. The main finding reveals that the men from both cultures share common patterns of perception and consumption of grooming products as well as differentiating patterns. Therefore, it is advised for marketers to be attentive to certain parameters when marketing on a cross cultural level. These parameters involve most importantly views and attitudes towards masculine perceptions which could potentially affect men's consumption and

¹⁸⁷ Coad 2008

which parameters men prioritise, as in the case of perfumes. Women's influence was found to be of universal importance. It was established that women's involvement in men's consumption of grooming products is significant. They encourage the men to buy certain products as well as advising them on certain rituals. Perhaps marketers may want to focus on the female consumer's involvement in the consumption decision process and in advertisements, while maintaining a subtle message, so that the men still feel they are making their own decisions. Otherwise, that could potentially threaten their masculine self. The übersexual type of man could inspire men to consume more body care products on a cross cultural level, as the results of this study indicate. This man reveals values that men can relate to and shows them that it is 'ok' to be concerned with grooming, while at the same time not losing their masculinity to any extent. Perhaps this appeal can potentially override other cultural and social factors when marketing cross culturally. All in all, one has to keep being attentive to constant cultural changes and patterns in a global world. If an important cultural or social aspect is neglected, may in fact jeopardise a whole marketing campaign.

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List of Appendixes

- All articles and reports
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